

A Handbook on the Harmful Effects of Pornography & Overcoming Them



Compiled primarily from the information available
at [Fight The New Drug](#) and [Fortify Program](#)

(For education purpose only. By Ashutosh Bhakuni)

PHONY OBJECTIFYING REDUCTIONIST NONSENSE



Porn Harms in Three Ways...



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Porn Is Like A Drug

<http://fightthenewdrug.org/porn-is-like-a-drug/>



On the surface, cocaine and porn don't seem to have a lot in common. One is purchased in seedy alleyways; the other is free to download. One habit can get expensive pretty fast, while the other is about the price of a high-speed Internet connection. Besides, Hugh Hefner doesn't exactly conjure up images of a cartel drug lord.

So where's the similarity? Inside the brain. [1]

In case you're not a neurosurgeon, here's a crash course in how the brain works. Deep inside your brain, there's something called a "reward pathway." [2] You've got one. Your cat's got one. For mammals, it comes standard. The reward pathway's job is to help keep you alive by doing exactly what its name promises: rewards you, or more specifically, rewards you when you do something that promotes life, such as eating food or achieving something you've worked hard for. [3] And the way it rewards you is by releasing chemicals in your brain—mainly one called dopamine, but also others like oxytocin. [4]

Normally, these chemicals are really handy. They help us feel pleasure and to bond with other people, and they motivate us to come back to important activities that make us happy. [5] The problem is, the reward pathway can be hijacked. [6]

The way substances like cocaine and opioids make users feel high is by triggering the reward pathway to release high levels of dopamine without making the user do any of the work to earn it. [7] Want to guess what else does that? Porn. [8]

And that surge of dopamine is causing more than just feelings. As it goes pulsing through the brain, dopamine helps to create new brain pathways that essentially lead the user back to the behavior that triggered the chemical release. [9]

The more a drug user hits up or a porn user looks at porn, the more those pathways get wired into the brain, making it easier and easier for the person to turn back to using, whether they want to or not. [10]

Over time, the constant overload of chemicals causes other brain changes as well. Just like a junkie will eventually require more and more of a drug to get a buzz or even just feel normal, porn users can quickly build up a tolerance as their brains adapt to the high levels of dopamine that porn releases. [11] In other words, even though porn is still releasing dopamine into the brain, the user can't feel its effects as much.

That's because the brain is trying to protect itself from the overload of dopamine by getting rid of some of its chemical receptors, [12] which act like tiny catcher's mitts that receive the dopamine released. With fewer receptors, the brain thinks less dopamine is there and the user doesn't feel

as strong a reaction. As a result, many porn users have to find more porn, find it more often, or find a more extreme version—or all three—to generate even more dopamine to feel excited. [13]

And once a porn user becomes accustomed to a brain pulsing with these chemicals, trying to cut back on the habit can lead to withdrawal symptoms, just like with drugs. [14]

While people often think of porn as something that's been around forever, today's version of porn is a whole new ball game. Thanks to the Internet, porn now mixes the most powerful natural dopamine release the body can produce with a cocktail of other elements—endless novelty, shock, and surprise—all of which increase the dopamine surge. [15] And because Internet porn offers an endless stream of variety, users can flip to a new image every time their high starts to fade, keeping dopamine levels elevated for hours.

Describing porn's effect to a U.S. Senate committee, Dr. Jeffrey Satinover of Princeton University said, "It is as though we have devised a form of heroin ... usable in the privacy of one's own home and injected directly to the brain through the eyes." [16]

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Porn Changes the Brain

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Yep, you read that right. Porn physically changes your brain.

Neurons that fire together, wire together. Just like other addictive substances, porn floods the brain with dopamine. That rush of brain chemicals happening over and over again rewires the brain's reward pathway ultimately changing the make up of the viewer's brain. This can result in an increased appetite for porn.

One of the most exciting developments in our understanding of the brain in the last two decades is the discovery of something called neuroplasticity, "neuro" meaning brain and "plasticity" meaning changeability. In other words, scientists have discovered that your brain is a lot like a never-ending game of Tetris, constantly laying down new pathways based on your experiences. [1]

To explain how it works, brain scientists have a saying: Neurons that fire together, wire together. [2]

If you're wondering what a neuron is and why it's on fire, here's what that means. A neuron is a brain cell, and when brain cells get activated at the same time by something you see or hear or smell or whatever, they release chemicals that help strengthen the connection between those neurons. [3] For example, when you eat something delicious, your brain releases dopamine, a chemical that makes you feel good. [4] Or if you hold hands with someone you care about, your brain releases a chemical called oxytocin, which helps you bond with people. [5]

So if every time you went to visit your Uncle Carl he gave you a big hug and then took you out for ice cream, you'd probably start feeling pretty great about Uncle Carl, since your brain would build pathways connecting Uncle Carl with feeling happy and loved. You have these kinds of brain pathways for all sorts of things: riding a bike, eating a sandwich, and walking the dog. And when a person looks at porn, their brain creates new pathways for that, too. [6]

Just like other addictive substances, porn floods the brain with dopamine. [7] But since the brain gets overwhelmed by the constant overload of chemicals that comes with consistent porn use, it fights back by taking away some of its dopamine receptors [8]—which are like tiny ears on the end of a neuron that hear dopamine's message.

With fewer receptors, even if the brain is putting off the same levels of dopamine in response to porn, the user can't feel dopamine's effect as much. [9] As a result, the porn they were looking at doesn't seem as arousing or exciting, and many porn users go hunting for more porn or more hardcore porn to get the effect the old porn used to offer. [10]

As a frequent porn user's brain acclimates to the new levels of dopamine flooding through it, regular activities that would normally set off a burst of dopamine and make the person feel happy

aren't strong enough to register much anymore, leaving the user feeling down or uneasy whenever they go for a while without looking at porn. [11] That's one reason why pornography can be so addictive. [12] (See [Porn is Addictive](#))

Once addiction sets in, the user has a whole new set of problems, because addiction damages the part of the brain that helps you think things through to make good choices—the brain's limit setting system. [13] For more than 10 years, studies have shown that drug addictions can cause the brain's frontal lobes to start shrinking. [14] While "frontal lobe" sounds really technical, basically it's the part of the brain that controls logical problem solving and decision making. [15] But recent studies have found that it's not just drugs that cause that kind of damage—the same problems show up with other kinds of addictions, such as overeating, Internet addictions, and sexual compulsion. [16]

And here's the really scary part: the more porn a person looks at, the more severe the damage to their brain becomes and the more difficult it is to break free. [17] But there's good news too: neuroplasticity works both ways. That means that the damage to the brain can be undone when someone gets away from unhealthy behaviors.

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Porn Is Addictive

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Pornographers promise healthy pleasure and relief from sexual tension, but what they often deliver is an addiction, tolerance, and an eventual decrease in pleasure.

—Norman Doidge, MD, *The Brain That Changes Itself* [1]

It wasn't very long ago that doctors and researchers believed that in order for something to be addictive, it had to involve an outside substance that you physically put into your body, like cigarettes, alcohol, or drugs. [2]

Once we got a peek into the brain, however, our understanding of how addictions work changed. [3] It turns out, cigarettes, alcohol, and drugs have more in common than you might think. Sure, on the outside, some are poured into a glass while others are lit on fire and smoked. But once they're in the body, they all do the same thing to the brain: flood it with a chemical called dopamine. [4] That's what makes them addictive. And porn does the exact same thing. [5]

You see, your brain comes equipped with something called a "reward pathway." [6] Its job is to motivate you to do things that keep you and your genes alive—things like eating or having sex to produce babies. [7] The way it rewards you is by releasing dopamine into your brain, because dopamine makes you feel good. [8]

However, just because your brain has adapted to motivate you to do something doesn't mean it's always good for you. For example, your brain produces higher levels of dopamine when you have chocolate cake than it does for whole-wheat bread. [9] Why? Because 3,000 years ago, high-calorie foods were really hard to come by, so when our ancestors found them, it was important that they eat a whole bunch while the getting was good. [10] These days, a bag of Oreos is only as far as the nearest supermarket. If we gorged on them every chance we got, chances are we'd get heart disease, gain weight, and develop a bunch of other health problems.

Porn is basically sexual junk food. When a person is looking at porn, their brain thinks they're seeing a potential mating opportunity, and pumps the brain full of dopamine. [11] And unlike healthy sexual relationships that build up over time with an actual person, porn offers an endless stream of hyper-sexual images that flood the brain with high levels of dopamine every time the user clicks to a new image. [12]

Setting your brain up for an overload of feel-good chemicals might sound like a good idea at first, but just like with junk food, what feels like a good thing, in this case isn't at all. Because porn use floods the brain with high chemical levels, the brain starts to fight back. Over time, the brain will actually cut down on its dopamine receptors—the tiny landing docks that take the dopamine in once it's been released in your brain. [13] As a result, porn that once excited a person often stops having the same effect, and the user has to look at more porn, look at porn more often, or find a more hardcore version—or all three—to get aroused. [14]

Eventually, as the brain acclimates to the overload of dopamine, users often find that they can't feel normal without that dopamine high. [15] Little things that used to make them happy, like seeing a friend or playing their favorite sport, can't compete with the dopamine flood that comes with porn, so they're left feeling anxious or down until they can get back to it. [16]

On top of that, dopamine doesn't travel alone. When the brain is getting a hit of dopamine, it's also getting new pathways built into it with a protein called "iFosB" (pronounced delta fos b). [17]

Essentially, iFosB's job is to help you remember to do things that feel good or are important. [18] While dopamine is motivating your brain to do things and rewarding it for doing them, iFosB is quietly leaving trail markers in your brain, creating a pathway to help you get back there. [19] When this happens with healthy behaviors, it's a very good thing. However, as little as one dose of many drugs will also cause iFosB to start building up in the brain's neurons, and of course porn's powerful dopamine surge causes iFosB to build up as well. [20]

The more a user looks at porn, the more iFosB accumulates, [21] essentially beating down the brain pathways leading to using, making it easier and easier for the user to turn back to that behavior, whether they want to or not. [22] Eventually, if enough iFosB accumulates, it can "flip a genetic switch," causing irreversible changes in the brain that leave the user more susceptible to addiction. [23]

And for teens, the risks are especially high, since a teen brain's reward pathway has a response two to four times more powerful than an adult brain—which means teen brains release even higher levels of dopamine. [24] Teen brains also produce higher levels of iFosB, leaving them extra vulnerable to addiction. [25]

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Porn Affects Your Behavior

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Many porn users find themselves getting aroused by things that used to disgust them or that go against what they think is morally right. And once they start watching extreme and dangerous sex acts, these porn users are being taught that those behaviors are more normal and common than they actually are.

Have you ever heard the phrase “Monkey see, monkey do”? It sounds simple, but it’s actually an illustration of some pretty complex brain science.

You see, monkeys, humans, and other mammals all have something in their brain called a “reward pathway.” [1] Part of the reward pathway’s job is to promote healthy living by rewarding you when you do something that either keeps you alive (e.g., eating) or creates a new life (e.g., sex) [2], or enriches your life with satisfying experiences and relationships. [3]

The way it rewards you is by pumping chemicals, especially one called “dopamine,” through your brain (See [Porn Changes the Brain](#)). [4] Dopamine makes you feel great, but its effects are not just temporary. While you’re enjoying that good feeling, it’s also building new pathways into your brain connecting together the different parts of the experience you had so you can remember to do that again. [5] That’s why the types of behaviors we link our pleasure response to tend to become habits and stick around. When this chemical learning process happens with healthy behaviors it helps us live well, but when it happens with secretive and unhealthy behaviors it has the opposite effect.

So when someone is looking at porn, while they think they’re just being entertained, their brain is busy at work building pathways between whatever’s happening on their screen and feelings of arousal. [6] Here’s where it gets tricky: The kind of porn a user watches can—and usually does—change over time. [7] So as their brain continually wires together what they’re seeing with feeling aroused, what turns them on can change too. [8]

A few years ago, a researcher named Jim Faust did an experiment with rats. [9] As you’d probably guess, rats usually don’t like the smell of death. But Faust found a way to change that instinct. Faust put virgin male rats in cages with female rats that had been sprayed with a liquid that smelled like dead, rotting rat. As it turned out, the drive to mate was more powerful than the instinct to avoid the smell, and the rats hit it off.

Once the male rats learned to associate sex with the smell of death, Faust put them in cages with dowels soaked in the same death smell. Consistently the male rats would play with the smelly dowels as though it were soaked in something they loved.

If you’re wondering how rats could possibly be trained to go against such a powerful natural instinct, the answer is dopamine. Since dopamine is released during sex, the rats’ brains wired together the pleasure of dopamine’s release with the rotten smell.

Sounds pretty gross, right? Well here's the thing—remember how we said all mammals have the same reward pathway in their brain? Those rats' preferences were rewired into their brains with the same process that many porn users' brains go through when they look at porn. [10] And more often than not, the images their brains are wiring sexual arousal to get more and more extreme. [11]

In a 2012 survey of 1,500 guys, 56% said their tastes in porn had become “increasingly extreme or deviant.” [12] Because consistent porn users' brains quickly become accustomed to the porn they've already seen (See [Porn Addiction Escalates](#)), they typically have to constantly be moving on to more extreme forms of pornography to get aroused by it. [13] As a result, just like the rats, many porn users find themselves getting aroused by things that used to disgust them or that go against what they think is morally right. [14]

And once they start watching extreme and dangerous sex acts, these types of porn users are being taught that those behaviors are more normal and common than they are. [15] One study found that people exposed to significant amounts of porn thought things like sex with animals and violent sex were twice as common as what those not exposed to porn thought. [16] And when people believe a behavior is normal, they're more likely to try it. [17]

Research has also found that watching degrading porn increases users' dominating and harassing behavior toward women, [18] and leaves the user feeling less compassion for rape victims. [19] Porn watchers are also more likely to express attitudes supporting violence against women [20]—which is especially scary since those who support sexual violence are more likely to commit that kind of violence in real life. [21] ([See Porn Leads to Violence](#))

Obviously not everyone who looks at porn is going to turn into a rapist; but the reality is that studies have shown that even casual pornography use has the power to start changing ideas and attitudes, [22] and changes to behavior often aren't far behind.

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Porn Addiction Escalates

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Because of its addictive nature, in order to just feel some sense of normality, an individual usually needs an ever increasing dosage of porn. The material that they seek out also evolves. Over time, their appetite pushes them to more hardcore versions to achieve the same level of arousal.

Have you ever wondered how pornographers that charge for their material stay in business when there's so much porn available for free? As Wendy Seltzer—an attorney and fellow at Yale Law School—explained, the answer is actually pretty simple: once porn users get hooked, they'll want more and more. "Seeing [free porn] just whets their appetite for more," Seltzer said. "Once they get through what's available for free, they'll move into the paid services." [1]

Fortunately for pornographers, that pattern isn't likely to change any time soon since the reason it happens is built into the brain.

Pornography researchers have found that users acclimate to the porn they watch—they get used to it, and it stops being exciting or arousing. Why? Because their brain's pleasure response has gotten numb. [2]

When a person is aroused by porn, their brain releases a chemical called dopamine that makes them feel pleasure. [3] As the dopamine goes through their brain, it leaves behind a pathway created by a protein called iFosB (pronounced delta fos b) [4] that connects feeling aroused to looking at porn. [5] Basically dopamine is saying "this feels good; let's remember how to get back here," and iFosB goes to work building a brain pathway to make it easier for the person to do that again. [6] When this happens with healthy behaviors it is a good thing, but when it happens with unhealthy ones it can lead to trouble.

The problem is, when a person consistently looks at porn, their brain is constantly being flooded with a high level of dopamine. A healthy brain isn't used to that, so the brain responds by getting rid of some of its dopamine receptors, which take in the dopamine that's released so that the brain knows it's there. [7] With fewer receptors, the user can't feel the dopamine's effects as much—and suddenly the porn that used to excite starts seeming boring. [8]

Many leading brain researchers now believe that once a porn user's brain starts cutting back on dopamine receptors, to get the same excitement and arousal they used to feel, many porn users need an even larger surge of dopamine; to get it, they have to look at more porn, look at porn more often, or look at more hardcore material. [9] You see, it's not just arousal that gets dopamine pumping. The brain also releases it when it sees something novel, shocking, or surprising. [10] That's why consistent porn users often find themselves looking for harder and harder images. [11] On top of that, because they've built up such a high tolerance to arousing material, to feel excited many users have to combine sexual arousal with the feeling of aggressive release. [12] That's why so much of hardcore porn is full of images of women being physically harmed. [13] It's also the reason that many porn addicts quickly find themselves looking at things that used to disgust them or that they used to see as morally wrong. [14]

On top of needing harder material, many porn addicts find themselves craving porn more and more often. [15] That's because while they're overloading their brain with dopamine, they're also building up higher levels of iFosB. [16] The more iFosB, the more the user's brain drives them to look at porn, even if they don't like the material they're looking at. [17]

As the addiction deepens, users not only become more impulsive, making it more likely that they'll give into their cravings, [18] but also whenever they encounter a stressful situation, they're more likely to feel like they don't have any way to deal with the stress other than by turning to porn's temporary distraction. [19]

And the more they turn back to their habit, the deeper the brain pathways that lead back to using become, making it harder and harder to break the cycle. [20]

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Porn Kills Love

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In real life, real love requires a real person. Research has found that after men are exposed to pornography, they rate themselves as less in love with their partner than men who didn't see any porn. On top of that, another study found that after being exposed to pornographic images, people were more critical of their partner's appearance, sexual curiosity, sexual performance, and displays of affection.

Pornographers pretend that what they're selling is Love 2.0. It's like love, they say, but easier.

You see, in real life, real love requires a real person. And a real person has thoughts and ideas and talents. Maybe they're quirky and fun to be around; maybe they're a great listener and always take time to hear how you're feeling; or maybe they're awesome at karaoke and being with them gives you the courage to get on stage too. Every person is a unique mix, and it's that awesome blend that we fall in love with.

Of course, pornographers can't offer any of that, so instead they capitalize on the fact that the real people that real love requires come with some complications. In real life, there's a chance your partner will be having a bad day or a bad hair day. Maybe they're tired or under a deadline, so they don't have time to do exactly what you want. And they have needs of their own that need to be considered.

In porn, all of that can get edited out: any physical flaws can be quickly Photoshopped away [1]; no matter what's happening to them, the people on screen can be made to look like they're having a good time [2]; and no one seems to have any needs of their own, opinions, or feelings to consider [3]. Besides, if anyone fails to immediately satisfy, there's always someone new to click to [4].

Doesn't sound much like real life or real love does it? Here's the thing: not only is porn a fantasy, but it also makes it harder for users to have real loving relationships [5].

Why? Because just like many other multibillion dollar industries, pornographers feed viewers completely unrealistic expectations in order to keep customers coming back [6]. Real love isn't any more like what happens in porn than the average Marlboro smoker is like a 6' 9" cowboy. But it works out well for pornographers since the more porn a viewer watches, the more their real relationships don't seem exciting enough [7], which gives them a reason to turn back to porn. And the more they watch porn, the more likely they are to be indoctrinated with porn's version of how relationships should go [8].

Since porn often portrays women as nothing more than sex objects that need to be dominated [9], it's not surprising that porn users often start seeing real women that way as well [10]. In one study of porn's effects, researchers broke participants up into three groups: to one they showed a high amount of pornography, one a medium amount, and the third a lower amount, and then followed with questions about what participants thought about women [11]. Results showed that the more porn a man was exposed to, the more likely he was to prefer that women be submissive

and subordinate to men. Since most women in our culture are taught to expect love to be built on equality and mutual respect, seeing women as subordinate isn't exactly a great start to lasting love. [12]

For those lucky enough to have found a special someone, using porn can take things downhill fast. Research has found that after men are exposed to pornography, they rate themselves as less in love with their partner than men who didn't see any porn [13]. On top of that, another study found that after being exposed to pornographic images, people were more critical of their partner's appearance, sexual curiosity, sexual performance, and displays of affection [14].

Over time, those who consistently use porn often may even lose interest in finding love altogether. Frequent porn use is associated with feeling cynical about love in general, less trust in romantic partners, and with feeling like marriage is confining [15].

Porn doesn't do any favors for the user's partner, either. Since so much of men's porn is only about what the man wants while ignoring anything about what's good for a woman or a relationship, wives and girlfriends often end up feeling like their partner doesn't really value them. [16] Many partners of porn users end up depressed, anxious, and feeling like they can never measure up. [17]

Of course, pornographers don't bother to mention any of this. Part of porn's fantasy is that a person can live in both worlds—that they can create a real, loving relationship, but also bring in thousands of other sexual partners as long as those partners are kept behind a computer screen. In reality, a porn habit can take a serious toll on a person's ability to offer someone real, unselfish, meaningful love [18]—which often means that in the end, they're left without much more than what's behind that computer screen. [19]

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Porn Is Full Of Lies

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In porn, everything from the way people look to how and why they have sex is a lie. Porn users often get so obsessed with chasing something that isn't real that they miss out on actual relationships.

Back in the 1950s, two researchers, Dr. Nikolaas Tinbergen and Dr. D. Magnus, played a trick on butterflies. [1] After figuring out which marks on female butterfly wings were most eye-catching to their mates, they created their own cardboard butterflies and painted them to look like super-females. Their wing patterns were based on the wings of normal butterflies, but with more exciting marks than would ever be found in nature.

And the butterflies fell for it. Even though real female butterflies were around and available, the males kept trying to partner with the cardboard versions. It wasn't getting them what they wanted—which was the chance to mate—but they had been tricked, so they ignored the real females and kept trying to charm the decoys.

Any of this sound familiar?

In porn, everything from the way people look to how and why they have sex is no more real than Tinbergen's cardboard wings. And just like the butterflies that got duped, porn users often get so obsessed with chasing something that isn't real that they miss out on actual relationships.

Thanks to teams of plastic surgeons and some help from Photoshop, the women in porn don't offer anything close to a realistic picture of what women in real life look like—particularly since we all get older, but pornographic images never age. [2] As a result, people that are regularly exposed to porn are more likely than others to feel poorly about how they look. [3] And after looking at even softcore porn, users feel worse about how their partner looks. [4]

And the fiction is more than skin deep. In most porn, a person is only worth the sum of their body parts; [5] it doesn't matter whether they're funny or smart, kind or interesting. All they are is a tool for sex. It shouldn't be a big surprise then that when teens watch or see sexual media, both boys and girls have stronger notions of women being sex objects. [6]

Even sex itself gets completely warped. A typical 45 minute porn flick takes three days of filming to produce, but leaves the viewer with the impression that everything they just watched happened without a break. [7] Porn also makes it look like no matter what a man does, the woman he's with is thrilled, even though the majority of sexual acts shown are degrading or violent. [8]

It can be tempting to think that porn is just one kind of sexual experience, not better or worse than any other sexual experience. After all, it can feel pretty similar. But our senses can be deceiving.

Let's say, for example, that you just got done with a 10 mile run on a hot day. You come inside and there are two glasses of water on the kitchen table. One is regular water from the tap; the other is salt water. Both look the same. Both are water. But while one glass will hydrate your body, the other will leave you more dehydrated than before. And over time, while regular water will keep you alive, drinking only salt water would kill you faster than if you drank nothing at all. [9]

It's the same with real relationships and porn. Why? Because porn is chock full of ideas and beliefs that are completely opposite of what real relationships, real sex, and real love are like. Healthy relationships are built on equality, honesty, respect, and love. But in porn, it's the reverse; interactions are based on domination, disrespect, abuse, violence, and detachment. [10]

Even the experience of using porn is the opposite of what real romantic relationships are like. A real romantic relationship is about being with a person and falling in love with them; it's about emotional connection and trust. In real relationships you can feel a person there, you can smell them and hear them laugh. The physical pleasure of sex is connected to sharing a whole relationship. With porn, however, sex is about being alone, watching other people do things. It's about constantly searching for something new, constantly being shocked and surprised. [11]

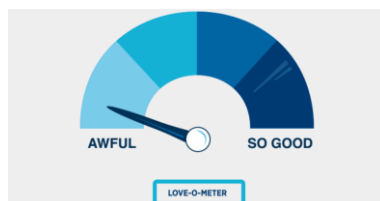
The more a person buys into the porn experience and its ideas, the harder it will be for them to have a real loving relationship (See [Porn Kills Love](#))—or even a real sex life (See [Porn Ruins Your Sex Life](#)).

Just like the butterflies learned, porn is not only deceiving, but it can also keep us from having the real relationships porn is trying to imitate (See [Porn Kills Love](#)). Turns out dating a piece of cardboard isn't all that great.

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Porn Ruins Your Sex Life

<http://fightthenewdrug.org/porn-ruins-your-sex-life/>



Porn promises a virtual world filled with sex—more sex, better sex. What it doesn't mention, however, is that the further a user goes into that fantasy world, the more likely their reality is to become just the opposite. [1] Porn often leads to less sex and less satisfying sex. [2] And for many users, porn eventually means no sex at all. [3]

It doesn't take much porn for things to start heading downhill. In one of the most comprehensive studies on porn use ever conducted, researchers found that after being exposed to softcore sexual material, both men and women were significantly less happy with their partner's looks, willingness to try new sex acts, and sexual performance. [4] Even being exposed to porn just once can make people feel less in love with their significant other. [5]

Why? Because when a person is watching porn, the sexual roadmaps in their brain are being redrawn. [6] When a person has a sexual experience that feels good, their brain creates a map to get them back there (See [Porn Changes the Brain](#)). And since our brains like novelty, brain maps that lead to something new and exciting are rewarded with an extra dose of brain chemicals that make us feel good while strengthening those brain pathways. [7]

Here's the catch: our brain maps are either use it or lose it. [8] Just like a hiking trail will start to grow over if its not getting walked on, brain pathways that don't get traffic start to get weaker. So when a person starts looking at porn, they first create and then strengthen brain pathways linking feeling aroused with images of porn. [9] Meanwhile the pathways connecting arousal with things like seeing, touching, or cuddling with their partner aren't getting used. Pretty soon, natural turn-ons aren't enough, and many porn users find they can't get aroused by anything but porn. [10]

For teens, it gets even scarier. Many teens never have the chance to learn what a healthy relationship is like before porn starts teaching them its version—which is typically filled with violence, domination, infidelity, and abuse. [11] Since most people aren't too excited about the idea of being in an abusive relationship, teens that have gotten their sex ed from porn often find that they struggle to connect with real romantic partners and that they don't know how to be turned on by anything other than images on a screen. [12] As biologist Gary Wilson said, "Using porn is more than just training for the wrong sport. It's replacing these guys' ability to play the sport they really want to learn." [13]

Beliefs and feelings aren't the only things that change, either. For a skyrocketing number of male porn users, it becomes blindingly clear that there's a problem when they realize they can no longer have real sex at all. [14]

Thirty years ago, when a man developed erectile dysfunction (ED), it was almost always because he was getting older, usually past 40, and as his body aged, his blood vessels would get blocked, making it harder to maintain an erection. Chronic ED in anyone under 35 was nearly unheard of. [15]

But those were the days before Internet porn. These days, online message boards are flooded with complaints from porn users in their teens and 20s complaining that they can't maintain an erection. [16] But for this kind of ED, the problem isn't in the penis—it's in the brain. [17]

Erections are powered by chemicals in the brain's reward center (See [Porn Is Like a Drug](#)) that are released when a guy sees, hears, smells, or feels something that turns him on. [18] The problem for porn users is that they've hijacked their reward center by using porn to get it to overload on these chemicals. [19] As a result, the user's brain responds by cutting down on the amount of pleasure chemicals it produces and stops responding as well to the chemicals that are being released. [20] It's like when you're standing next to a fire alarm that goes off; it's too much noise so you cover your ears. That's what porn user's brains are doing. When chemical levels are too high, the brain fights back by blocking some of the flood of chemicals released.

On top of that, porn users have wired their brain to get aroused by sitting alone in a room looking at virtual images rather than connecting arousal to being with a real person. [21]

Due to their lowered sexual response and altered brain pathways, many porn users find they just can't get excited enough to maintain an erection without porn; and for many users, over time, even porn isn't enough. [22]

(Click on the article link for citations)

Porn Hurts Your Partner

<http://fightthenewdrug.org/porn-hurts-your-partner/>



Several studies have found that partners of porn users often report feeling loss, betrayal, mistrust, devastation, and anger when they learn that the other half of their committed relationship has been using porn. Many show physical symptoms of anxiety and depression.

Here's an inconvenient truth: While porn is something users can choose to do on their own, that use doesn't just affect them—it affects their partner too, and not for the better. Two of the most respected pornography researchers, professors Jennings Bryant and Dolf Zillman at the University of Alabama, who have studied the effects of porn and media for more than 30 years, said that when it comes to porn use “no rigorous research demonstrations of desirable effects can be reported.” [1] In other words, in all the serious research that's been done on porn, no one has found that it has any benefits. What several studies have found, however, is that porn use can cause serious damage not only to the user, but also to those closest to them—especially their partner. [2]

Studies have shown that even casual use of porn can cause the user to feel less attracted to their partner. [3] And when a person frequently uses pornography, they're far more likely to feel less satisfied with their partner's looks, sexual performance, and willingness to try new sexual acts. [4]

Why all the sudden disappointment with one's partner? It's likely due to the fact that porn promotes a completely fictional version of how people look and behave (See [Porn Is a Lie](#)), and makes it look like an exciting reality—one that their partners often feel they can never live up to. [5]

Given that the women depicted in porn are surgically enhanced, air-brushed, and photoshopped, [6] it's not hard to see why, according to a national poll, that only one in seven women doesn't think that porn has raised men's expectations of how women should look. [7]

And it's not only looks that are being depicted with unrealistic standards. In almost all porn, sex is all about men; [8] women are depicted as being happy with whatever a man wants to do, even if it's dangerous, painful, or humiliating. [9] A study of the most popular porn videos found that nine scenes out of 10 showed women being verbally or physically abused, yet the female victims almost always responded with either pleasure or appeared to be neutral. [10] In even the most mainstream porn, the sex acts shown are overwhelmingly degrading toward women, and are usually geared toward enhancing male pleasure. [11] As a result, male porn users' ideas of what sex should be are often warped [12] and their partners often report that they are asked to act out porn scripts or do things they're not comfortable with or find demeaning. [13]

In interviews with college-age women, writer Naomi Wolf has found that in sexual relationships, women frequently feel that “they can never measure up, that they can never ask for what they want.” [14]

And the emotional pain can run much deeper than having a bad experience in the bedroom. Since women in our culture typically expect their intimate relationships to be built on trust, respect, honesty, and love, when a woman learns that her partner is using porn—which typically glorifies the opposite: disrespect, abuse, aggression, and infidelity—it can not only damage the trust she has in her partner, but also shake the foundation of everything she believed about her relationship. [15]

That pain can have very serious consequences. Several studies have found that women often report feeling loss, betrayal, mistrust, devastation, and anger when they learn that their partner in a committed relationship has been using porn. [16] Many women show physical symptoms of anxiety and depression. Some show signs of PTSD, and some even become suicidal. [17]

To make matters worse, the majority of women who learn of a partner's pornography use isolate themselves at least somewhat from their normal sources of social support, just when they need those support systems most. [18] In many cases, women fear telling anyone at all, either because they're embarrassed about it or they're afraid of being blamed for their partner's problem. [19]

For many partners, the blame can even come from themselves. One study of women in relationships with porn addicts found that while the women often felt their partner was uncaring or selfish, they also worried that somehow the problem was their fault. [20] And for many of the women, their partner's porn use made them feel like the entire relationship was a complete farce. [21]

(Click on the article link for citations)

Porn Leaves You Lonely

<http://fightthenewdrug.org/porn-leaves-you-lonely/>



From a business perspective, the porn industry has a pretty clever racket going. Their product offers users temporary relief from anxiety, depression, and loneliness in exchange for making these same problems much worse in the long-term. [1] That works out really well for pornographers, since the worse their customers' anxiety and isolation grow, the more reason they have to turn back to porn. But for the user, the end result isn't nearly so nice.

"Any time [a person] spends much time with the usual pornography usage cycle, it can't help but be a depressing, demeaning, self-loathing kind of experience," says Dr. Gary Brooks, a psychologist who has worked with porn addicts for the last 30 years. [2]

The more pornography a person consumes, the more their brain connects being aroused with porn's fictional fantasy (See [Porn Changes the Brain](#))[3]—and the harder it becomes for them to be aroused by a real person or a real relationship (See [Porn Ruins Your Sex Life](#)). [4]

As a result, many users start feeling like something's wrong with them; they don't know how to be turned on by a real person, much less form a deep personal connection with one. [5]

Naomi Wolf, an author and political activist, has traveled all over the country to talk with college students about relationships. "When I ask about loneliness, a deep, sad silence descends on audiences of young men and young women alike," she says. "They know they are lonely together ... and that [porn] is a big part of that loneliness. What they don't know is how to get out." [6]

Studies have found that when people engage in an ongoing pattern of "self-concealment,"—which is when they do things they're not proud of and keep them a secret from their friends and family members—it not only hurts their relationships and leaves them feeling lonely, but also makes them more vulnerable to severe psychological problems. [7] For both male and female porn users, their habit is often accompanied by problems with anxiety, body-image issues, poor self-image, relationship problems, insecurity, and depression. [8]

Porn teaches that both men and women aren't worth anything more than the sum of their body parts and how much sexual pleasure they can offer. [9] Whether porn users like it or not, those perceptions often start creeping into how they see themselves and other people in real life. [10] The harder it becomes for the user to see themselves and others as anything more than sexual objects, the harder it is to develop real relationships. [11]

"There's a certain way of experiencing sexual arousal that is the opposite of closeness," Brooks said. "At best, it can be managed somewhat by some people, but most of the time it creates a barrier that poisons relationships." [12]

(Click on the article link for citations)

Porn's Dirty Little Secret

<http://fightthenewdrug.org/porns-dirty-little-secret/>



To viewers, pornography can appear a fantasy world of pleasure and thrills. To those who create and participate in making pornography, however, their experiences are often flooded with drugs, disease, slavery, trafficking, rape and abuse.

I got the &%\$ kicked out of me Most of the girls start crying because they're hurting so bad I couldn't breathe. I was being hit and choked. I was really upset and they didn't stop. They kept filming. [I asked them to turn the camera off] and they kept going. –Regan Starr [1]*

The pornography industry works hard to keep up a glamorous image, but behind the camera is a reality of violence, drugs, and human trafficking.

With some editing and off-screen coercion, pornographers can make it look like what's happening onscreen is being enjoyed. But the un-cut version is a different story. Porn actors are constantly threatened and emotionally and verbally abused by agents and directors to force them into doing things they don't want to do. [2]

"You're viewed as an object and not as a human with a spirit," wrote Jersey Jaxin, a former porn star that left the industry in 2007. "People do drugs because they can't deal with the way they are being treated. Seventy five percent [of porn performers] and rising are using drugs. Have to numb themselves. There are specific doctors in this industry that if you go in for a common cold they'll give you Vicodin, Viagra, anything you want because all they care about is the money. You are a number. You're bruised. You have black eyes. You're ripped. You're torn. You have your insides coming out." [3]

Not only do pornographers crop out the severe physical and emotional pain actors experience, but in many cases they also hide the fact that some "performers" aren't given any choice at all.

Part of the lie porn producers want customers to buy into is that porn is legitimate entertainment made by glamorous people who are doing it because it's what they want; it's OK for the user to enjoy it because the people they're watching seem to be enjoying it. What they don't say is that some of those people look like they're having a good time because behind the scenes they have a gun pointed at their head. And if they stop smiling, it will go off. [4]

Obviously, human trafficking is an underground business, making firm statistics hard to come by. But the facts in cases that come to light are chilling. For example, in 2011, two Miami men were found guilty of spending five years luring women into a human trafficking trap. They would advertise modeling roles, then when women came to try out, they would drug them, kidnap them, rape them, videotape the violence, and sell it to pornography stores and businesses across the country. [5]

That same year a couple in Missouri was charged with forcing a mentally handicapped girl to produce porn for them by beating, whipping, suffocating, electrocuting, drowning, mutilating, and

choking her until she agreed. One of the photos they forced her to make ended up on the front cover of a porn publication owned by Hustler Magazine Group. [6]

Those cases are just the tip of the iceberg; many more like them exist, and for each victim discovered, countless others suffer in silence. [7]

Still others are victimized by being forced into prostitution.

Given that pornography makes prostitution and sexually exploiting others look normal, [8] it's not surprising that there's a strong association between pornography use and going to prostitutes. [9] In fact, men who go to prostitutes are twice as likely to have watched a porn film in the last year compared to the general population. [10] It's also not surprising that when these customers show up, many come ready with porn images in hand to show the women they're exploiting—many of which are human trafficking victims controlled by pimps—what they'll be forced to do. [11]

And they're not the only ones using porn as an illustration. "Pimps and traffickers use pornography to initiate their ... victims into their new life of sexual slavery," says Dr. Janice Shaw Crouse, a former UN representative and a senior fellow at the Beverley LaHaye Institute. Through exposure to porn, these victims "get hardened to accept the inevitable and learn what is expected of them." [12]

In a study of 854 women in prostitution across nine countries, 49% said that porn had been made of them while they were in prostitution, and 47% said they had been harmed by men who had either forced or tried to force their victims to do things the men had seen in porn. [13]

In the end, porn fuels prostitution; and porn and prostitution are the products the sex trade exists to deliver. [14]

(Click on the article link for citations)

Porn Leads to Violence

<http://fightthenewdrug.org/porn-leads-to-violence/>



It's no secret that some porn is violent, but most people think that's something different from mainstream pornography—something out on the fringe. Not all porn is the same, its defenders say. People can choose what they like, and if they're into violent stuff, that's their business, right?

It's true that not all porn is the same, but the reality is that the majority of even the most mainstream porn is packed full of women being physically and verbally abused—and watching it takes a serious toll on the user.

A few years ago, a team of researchers looked at the most popular porn films—the ones bought and rented most often. [1] From that group, they randomly picked 50 and analyzed them. Of the 304 scenes the movies contained, 88% contained physical violence. On top of that, 49% contained verbal aggression. In total, only one scene in 10 didn't contain any aggression, and the typical scene averaged 12 physical or verbal attacks. One action-packed scene managed to fit in 128.

Unlike violence in regular movies where someone gets punched, gets mad, and fights back, 95% of the victims of aggression in the porn scenes either were neutral or responded with pleasure. And while the targets were women 94% of the time, when a man was the victim, he was four times more likely than his female costars to be upset at his attacker.

In other words, in porn, women are getting beat up and they're smiling about it.

For porn users, even those that manage to avoid violent material, it's difficult not to be influenced. Study after study has found that watching even non-violent porn is correlated with the user being more likely to use verbal coercion, drugs, and alcohol to push women into sex. [2] And those who consistently look at non-violent porn are more likely to support statements that promote abuse and sexual aggression of both women and girls. [3] Much of even non-violent porn portrays a power difference between partners where men are in charge and women are submissive and obedient. Viewing this type of dehumanizing submission makes dominance seem normal and can set the stage for eventual acceptance of verbal and physical aggression. [4]

And the changes don't always stop with the user's attitude. An analysis of 33 different studies found that exposure to both non-violent and violent porn increases aggressive behavior, including both having violent fantasies and actually committing violent assaults. [5]

Not surprisingly, the more violent the porn, the more likely the user is to support and act out violence. [6]

If you're wondering how sitting in a chair watching porn can actually change what a person thinks and does, the answer goes back to how porn changes the brain (See [Porn Changes the Brain](#)). Our brains have what scientists call "mirror neurons"—brain cells that fire not only when we do things ourselves, but also when we watch other people do things. [7] This is why movies can make us cry or get scared; or why some people can get so emotionally involved in watching a football game on TV. When a person is watching porn, their brain is busy wiring together whatever is

happening on the screen to sexual arousal—in many ways just like if a person was actually doing what they are watching. [8] So if they're watching a woman get kicked around and called names while feeling aroused, they're more likely to associate that kind of violence with being sexy. [9] Even when porn isn't violent, viewers are learning to see other people as nothing more than objects made to be used for sexual pleasure. [10]

To make matters worse, when porn shows the victims of violence accepting or enjoying being hurt, the person watching is learning that people want and like to be treated that way, giving viewers added permission to act that way themselves. [11]

That education leads to behavior changes that range from being more likely to verbally harass women, [12] to problems as serious as rape. The scary truth is that both non-violent and violent porn make users more likely to support violence against women and to believe that women enjoy being raped, [13] and those beliefs have been found across several research studies to be predictive of a person being sexually aggressive in real life. [14] With violent and rape porn, the associations get particularly strong. [15] In fact, one study found that those who reported higher past exposure to violent porn were six times more likely to report having raped someone than those that had low past exposure. [16]

Of course, not every porn watcher is going to turn into a rapist, but that doesn't mean pornography use isn't still associated with a wave of violence on a massive scale. The vast majority of the porn viewed by millions of people every day is teaching that humiliation and violence are a normal part of what sex is supposed to be [17]—and that education is changing what happens in bedrooms around the world. [18] It's making it harder for many men to feel aroused unless they can do the things they've seen in porn [19], and it's leaving women feeling like they can't express the pain it's causing them. [20] And the more porn teaches us that aggression is a part of sex, the more that violence is being made invisible. [21]

(Click on the article link for citations)

Porn Warps Ideas About Sex

<http://fightthenewdrug.org/porn-warps-ideas-about-sex/>



Whether they want to or not, the majority of teens are getting some of their sex ed from porn. Researchers have repeatedly found that people who have seen a significant amount of porn are more likely to start having sex sooner and with more partners, and to engage in riskier kinds of sex, putting them at greater risk of getting sexually transmitted infections.

Can you imagine what would happen if your school's health class was taught by a cigarette salesman? Chances are, you wouldn't hear much about lung cancer or how much shorter the typical smoker's life span is. He might even try to tell you that smoking could boost your sprint time. Sounds ridiculous, right? Here's the problem: that's the kind of education millions of teens are getting about sex every day.

While porn is often called "adult material," many of its viewers are well under the legal age. Whether they want to or not, the majority of teens are getting some of their sex ed from porn. [1] And just like cigarette commercials show healthy people puffing away instead of the cancer-causing reality, porn is offering a completely warped idea of what partners, sex, and relationships are really like. [2]

In porn, sex with strangers is made to look normal [3]—and more often than not, it's more than one stranger at a time. In a study of popular porn videos, the number of sexual partners in a scene ranged from one to 19, and averaged at three. And the kinds of sexual acts pornographers get on film are often degrading, dangerous, or violent. [4]

"A competitive market means that pornographers are trying to outdo each other to come up with the most extreme images," wrote John Wood, a therapist who works with youth addicted to pornography, in an article talking about porn's effects. "This contest to push the boundaries means that straight intercourse is considered too boring. Images of brutal anal sex and women being humiliated and degraded by two or more men at any one time are the new norms." [5]

As a result, studies show that people who view porn are far more likely to think things like group sex or dangerous sex acts are more common than their non-porn-watching peers. [6]

And in many cases, attitudes make their way into behavior. Researchers have repeatedly found that people who have seen a significant amount of porn are more likely to start having sex sooner and with more partners, and to engage in riskier kinds of sex, putting them at greater risk of getting sexually transmitted infections. [7]

Sociologist Michael Kimmel has found that men's sexual fantasies have become heavily influenced by porn, [8] which gets awfully tricky when their partners don't want to act out the degrading or dangerous acts porn shows. [9] As a result, men who look at pornography have been shown to be more likely to go to prostitutes, [10] often looking for a chance to live out what they've seen in porn. [11] In one survey of former prostitutes, 80% said that customers had shown them images of porn to illustrate what they wanted to do. [12]

What pornography doesn't show is what healthy sex is like, since most pornographers cut out things like kissing, cuddling, other positive kinds of affection, and partners being responsive to each other's needs and preferences. [13]

They also cut out the consequences of the kinds of sex shown. [14] In porn, no one contracts sexually transmitted infections; there are no unwanted pregnancies, no cervical cancer, no intestinal parasites, and no skin tearing or bruises. And no matter how rough a person treats their partner, in porn, nearly everything looks like it feels good. [15]

In fact, in the study of popular porn videos, in nine scenes out of 10, a woman was being hit, beaten, yelled at, or otherwise harmed, and the result was almost always the same—the victim either seemed not to mind or looked happy about it. [16]

Not only does porn offer up a fictional version of sex education, but also that education is being delivered in a way perfectly tailored to how our brains learn. [17] Images are an especially powerful teacher, since they can pack in a whole lot of information that the viewer can understand very quickly. And while words are often interpreted as opinions, our brains are more likely to interpret images as facts; after all, it's a lot harder to argue with something you're seeing happen in front of you. [18]

Our brains also learn better when they're sexually aroused. [19] When you add in the focused concentration of searching through pornographic images to find exactly what the user is looking for, and reinforcing what's being taught with the reward of sexual climax, it creates the perfect conditions for wiring what porn teaches into the brain (See [Porn Changes the Brain](#)). [20]

As a result, consistent porn users wire their sexuality to looking at virtual images of unrealistic, surgically altered bodies. [21] Instead of learning to build relationships with real people, it often feels more natural and arousing to them to be alone in front of a computer. [22] "It's sad," said Dr. Gary Brooks, a psychology professor who studies porn's effect on men. "Boys who are initiated in sex through these images become indoctrinated in a way that can potentially stay with them for the rest of their lives." [23]

(Click on the article link for citations)

Porn Hates Families

<http://fightthenewdrug.org/porn-hates-families/>



Life as a pro basketball player looks pretty good. The pay is great, you'd get to wear shorts to work, and your professional goals would include things like dunking more. So let's say you decided to make that your plan: become a professional ball player by age 21. Chances are, you wouldn't start preparing by picking up a cigarette habit and switching to a donuts-only diet.

So what does aiming for the NBA have to do with porn? The point is, most of us have an idea of what we want to do in life, and for the majority of people, that plan involves having a family. In fact, more than 80 percent of young adults say that getting married is an important priority in their life plan. [1] And considering married people are far more likely to say they are "highly satisfied" with their lives, it's probably not such a bad goal. [2] The problem for porn users is that healthy marriages and porn don't mix well.

Research has found that marriages in which one person has a porn problem or sexual compulsion are often plagued by less intimacy and sensitivity, as well as more anxiety, secrecy, isolation, and dysfunction in the relationship. [3] And since many porn users end up losing their jobs as a result of looking at porn on a company computer, these marriages can end up with less financial security as well. [4]

In fact, many women—regardless of what their religious beliefs are—see looking at porn as a serious threat to being able to stay married at all. [5] Why? For one thing, when a partner is using porn often, it takes away time they could otherwise be spending together. [6] On top of that, many partners consider it cheating—or close to cheating—when their partner is using images of someone else's body to get aroused. [7]

And virtual cheating isn't the only thing user's spouses have to worry about. Studies have found that married porn users are more likely than non-users to have sex with someone other than their spouse, [8] and men who look at porn are also more likely to go to prostitutes. [9] As one researcher said, "Men witness the abuse of women in pornography constantly, and if they can't engage in that behavior with their wives, girlfriends, or children, they force a [prostitute] to do it." [10]

And even if a user never goes that far, people who look at pornography are also more likely to be more sexually permissive—such as being OK with having lots of sexual partners and dangerous kinds of sex—which is associated with having less stable marriages later in life. [11]

As a result, divorces related to porn use have "exploded," says Dr. Gary Brooks, a psychologist who has been working with porn addicts for 30 years. [12] In a survey of members of the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers taken in 2002, 62 percent of the divorce attorneys surveyed said that obsession with porn had been a significant factor in divorces cases they had handled in the last year. [13]

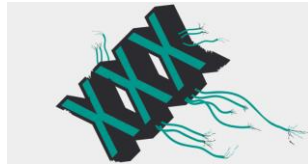
Whether or not a porn user's marriage falls apart, their spouse isn't the only one affected. Children are often victims, too, either by being directly exposed to pornographic images or by being neglected by a parent who uses the time they could be spending with their kids to instead sit alone in front of their computer. [14] In a 2004 poll conducted by *Elle* magazine and MSNBC.com, one in five of the male respondents confessed that porn was taking away hours that used to be spent with their partner or kids. Among users that spent five or more hours per week looking at porn, that number shot up to 37 percent. [15]

Not everyone will or even wants to make it to the NBA, but most people want to be happy (See [Porn Leaves You Lonely](#)) and to have a happy family as well. And the more we learn about porn and its effects, the clearer it becomes that a porn habit makes both of those goals harder and harder to reach.

(Click on the article link for citations)

Porn's Harm Is Changing Fast

<http://fightthenewdrug.org/porns-harm-is-changing-fast/>



Skeptics of pornography's danger will often point out that porn has been around for a long time. After all, cavemen drew sexual images on their stone walls, and the ancient Greeks painted it on their pottery. But comparing ancient paintings on clay vases to today's endless stream of live action videos depicting every possible sexual act, available 24 hours a day on a device that fits into your pocket isn't exactly comparing apples to apples.

So what changed? Like most large cultural shifts, nothing happened overnight, but some wheels were already turning back in 1953, the year Hugh Hefner published the first copy of Playboy.

Sex had become a more prominent part of American's cultural conversation due in part to Dr. Alfred Kinsey, who five years earlier had published a controversial but extremely popular book on sexuality. [2] He was heralded as one of the first scientists and writers to talk so openly about sexuality. [3] As a result, his books went flying off the shelves. [4]

Hefner capitalized on the trend with his magazine. However, to maximize sales, he had to change porn's image; instead of being thought of as something your friend's creepy uncle might have, porn needed to look mainstream. To do that, Hefner put pornographic photos next to essays and articles written by respected authors. In Playboy, porn looked like a gentleman's pursuit.

The next big shift happened in the 1980s, when VCRs made it possible for people to watch movies at home. [5] For porn users, that meant that instead of having to go to seedy movie theaters on the wrong side of town, all they had to do was go to the back room at their local movie rental place. Sure, they still had to go out to find it, but porn was suddenly a lot more accessible.

And then the Internet changed everything. [6]

Once porn hit the Web, suddenly there was nothing but a few keystrokes between anyone with an Internet connection and the most graphic material available, [7] and the online porn industry exploded. Between 1998 and 2007, the number of pornographic websites grew by 1,800%. [8] According to a 2004 study of Internet traffic in May of that year, porn sites were visited three times more often than Google, Yahoo!, and MSN Search combined. [9]

And porn hasn't stayed behind the computer screen. Now that porn is more available, affordable, and anonymous than ever before, more people are becoming addicted [10] and its influence has soaked into every aspect of our lives. [11] Popular video games feature full nudity. [12] Snowboards marketed to teens are plastered with images of porn stars. [13] Even children's toys have become more sexualized. [14]

Television shows and movies have been impacted too as producers and writers have upped the ante with more and more graphic content to keep the attention of audiences accustomed to porn. [15] Between 1998 and 2005, the number of sex scenes on American TV shows nearly doubled. [16] And it's not just happening on adult programs. In a study conducted in 2004 and 2005, 70%

of the 20 TV shows most often watched by teens included sexual content and nearly half showed sexual behavior. [17]

And the more our society becomes sexually saturated, the more porn makers pump out harder and harder material to make sure they stay on the cutting edge. [18]

“Thirty years ago ‘hardcore’ pornography usually meant the explicit depiction of sexual intercourse,” wrote Dr. Norman Doidge, in his recent book on neuroscience, *The Brain That Changes Itself*. “Now hardcore has evolved and is increasingly dominated by the sadomasochistic themes ... all involving scripts fusing sex with hatred and humiliation. Hardcore pornography now explores the world of perversion, while softcore is now what hardcore was a few decades ago The comparatively tame softcore pictures of yesteryear ... now show up on mainstream media all day long, in the pornification of everything, including television, rock videos, soap operas, advertisements, and so on.” [19]

And not only is there more porn to watch, but also there are more ways than ever to watch it. [20] Today, not only do we have high-speed Internet, we’ve got it on tap for devices we have with us 24 hours a day. Families have gone from having one shared computer to often having multiple personal laptops, smartphones, and tablets. With the launch of Google Glass, it’s now possible to have an Internet-enabled screen in front of our eyes nearly every minute of the day.

As porn’s availability has risen, so have its devastating effects on people (See [Porn Is Like a Drug](#)), relationships (See [Porn Kills Love](#)), and society (See [Porn Leads to Violence](#) & [Porn’s Dirty Little Secret](#)) at large. [21] As therapist John Woods recently wrote, pornography addiction “is no longer just a private problem. It is a public health problem.” [22]

(Click on the article link for citations)

The **Pornification** of Humanity...

Statistics to blow your mind!

The following pages contain a few statistics about humanity's consumption of porn. And these are ONLY for videos and from just ONE website, claiming to be the biggest, which maintains its statistics very religiously and proudly, releasing annual reports. As per [TopTenReviews](#), on the entire internet, there are a total of 4.2 million porn websites (12% of total), 1.5 billion peer-to-peer porn downloads per month (35% of total), 68 million daily porn search engine requests (25% of total) out of which 116,000 are child porn requests, and 28,258 people viewing pornography per second, with average user age of first internet porn exposure being 11 years! Some call it the liberation of sex (even liberation of love), women's empowerment to explore sexuality, modernisation, freedom from oppressive sexual taboos, and even the right to freedom of choice and the right to watch. Is it really our society's maturation about love and sex, or our dehumanising pornification?

- (1) Porn sites receive more regular traffic than Netflix, Amazon, & Twitter combined. ([HuffPost](#))
- (2) 35% of all internet downloads are porn-related. ([WebRoot](#))
- (3) 34% of internet users have been exposed to unwanted porn via ads, pop-ups, etc. ([WebRoot](#))
- (4) Porn increased marital infidelity by 300%. ([WebRoot](#))
- (5) 30% of all data transferred across the internet is porn-related. ([HuffPost](#))
- (6) The most common female role in porn is women in their 20's portraying teenagers. ([Jon Millward](#). *In 2013, Millward conducted the largest personal research study on the Porn Industry in the U.S. He interviewed 10,000 porn stars about various aspects of the business.*)
- (7) Child porn is one of the fastest growing online businesses. ([IWF](#))
- (8) 624,000 child porn traders have been discovered online in the U.S. ([Innocent Justice](#))
- (9) Approximately 55% of teen girls living on the streets have engaged in prostitution. ([Enough.org](#))
- (10) Child porn is a \$3 billion industry. ([TopTenReviews](#))

Source: <http://fightthenewdrug.org/10-porn-stats-that-will-blow-your-mind/>

2015 YEAR IN REVIEW

Pornhub



BANDWIDTH USED
1,892 PETABYTES

STREAMED
75 GB PER SECOND



4,392,486,580

THAT'S 2.5X
LONGER THAN
HOMO SAPIENS
HAVE BEEN ON
EARTH.

**HOURS OF PORN
WERE WATCHED
ON PORNHUB**

NUMBER OF VIDEOS VIEWED
87,849,731,608

THAT'S 12 VIDEOS VIEWED PER PERSON ON EARTH.

21.2 BILLION VISITS

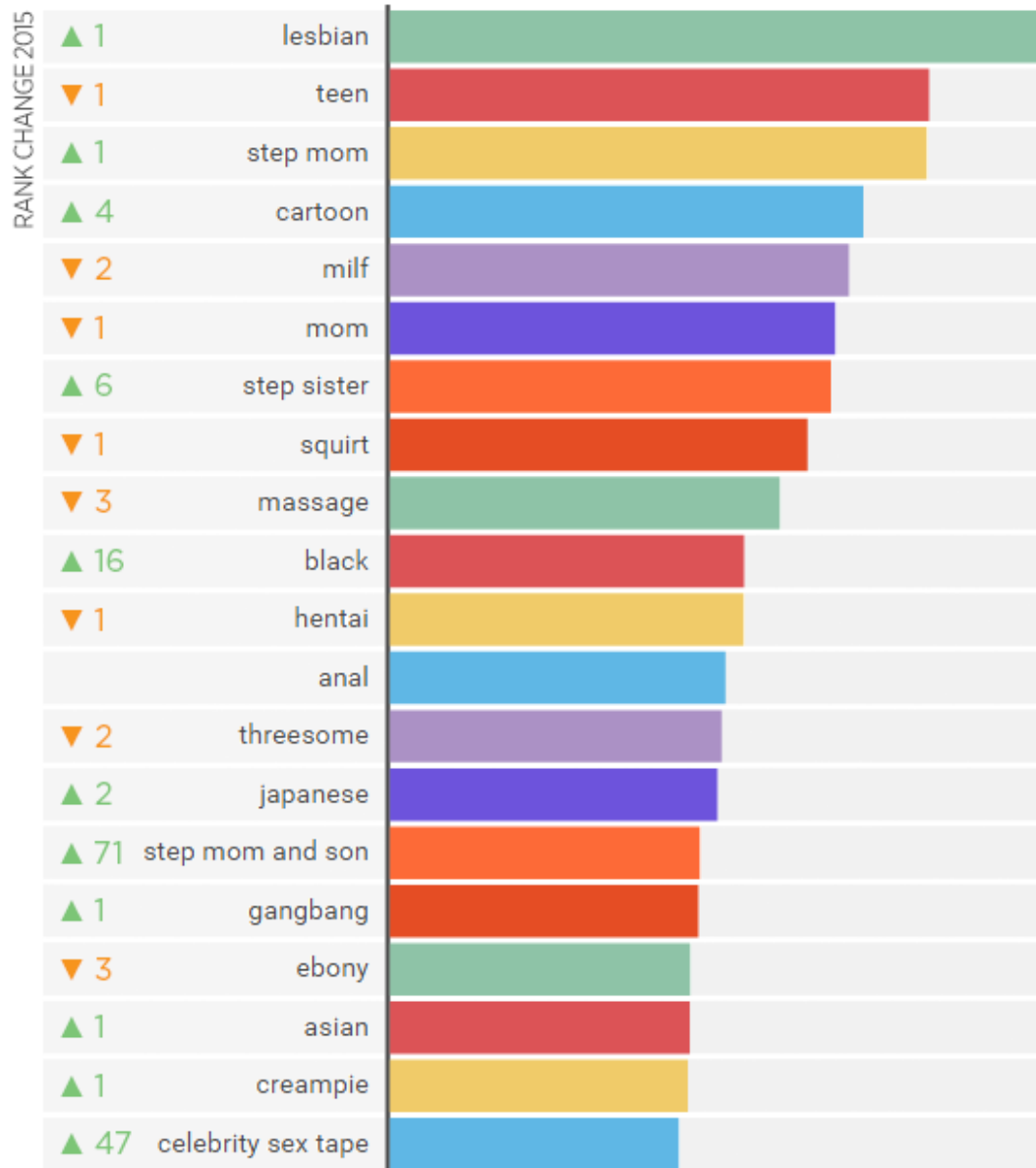
2.4 M PER HOUR 40 K PER MIN 6.7 K PER SEC

2015 YEAR IN REVIEW

Top Searches of 2015

Pornhub

Most Popular Search Terms Worldwide



pornhub.com/insights

The World's Favorite Categories

2015 YEAR IN REVIEW

The #1 Pornhub Category in Different Parts of the World

Pornhub

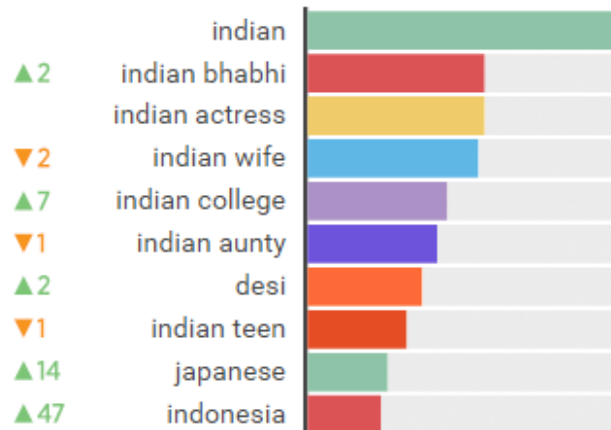


2015 YEAR IN REVIEW



Pornhub

Top 10 Searches of 2015



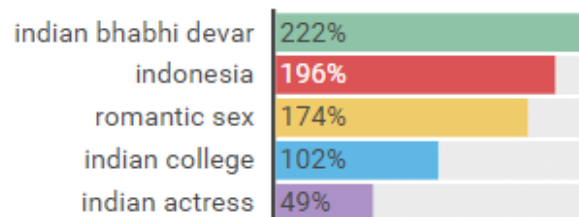
Top 3 Categories

- 1 Teen
- 2 Babe
- 3 Big Cock

Top 3 Pornstars

- 1 Sunny Leone
- 2 Mia Khalifa
- 3 Lisa Ann

Top Gaining Searches



Top Relative Searches

Searched more compared to world

- 1 indian bhabhi
- 2 indian actress
- 3 indian wife

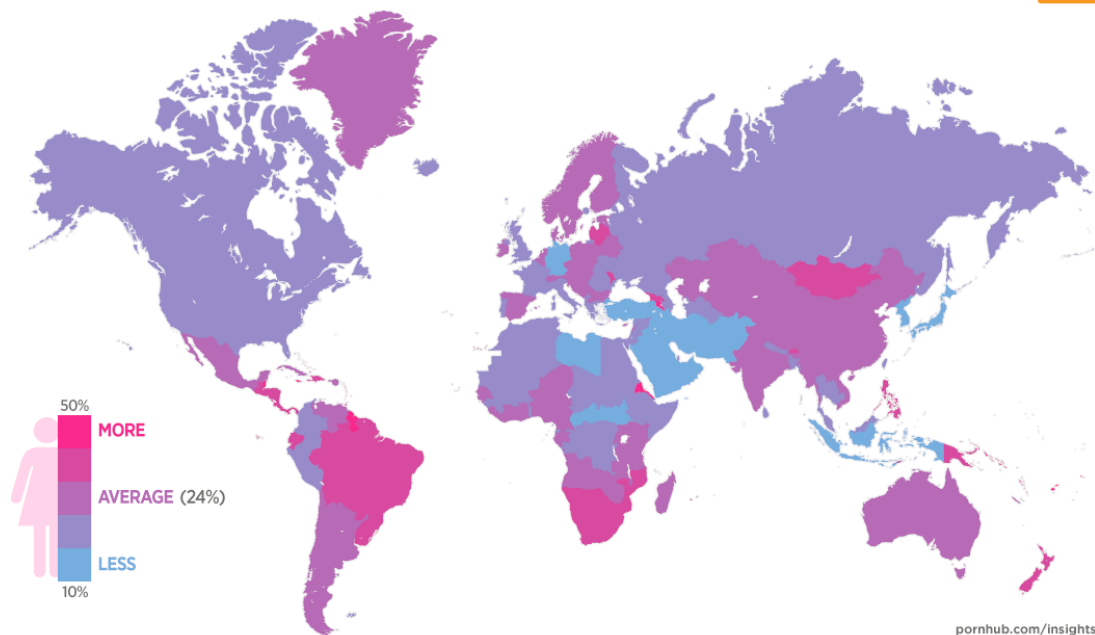
pornhub.com/insights

WOMEN - Worldwide Traffic

2015 YEAR IN REVIEW

Proportion of Female Visitors Worldwide

Pornhub

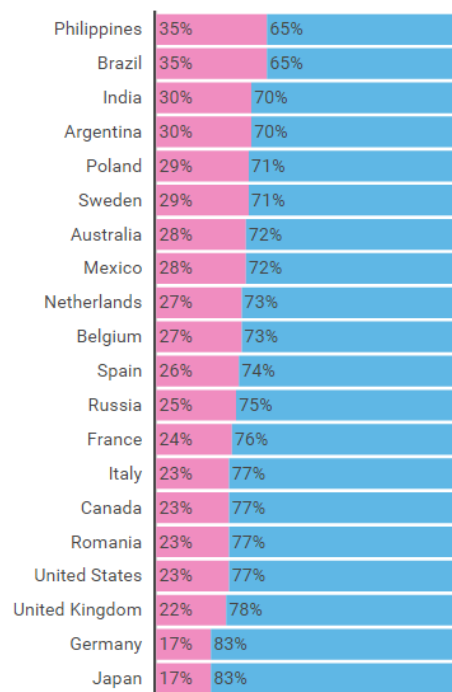


2015 YEAR IN REVIEW

Women Visitors Worldwide

Pornhub

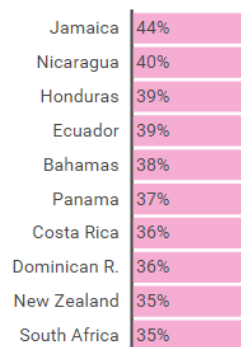
What Proportion of Pornhub Viewers are Women



● Women ● Men

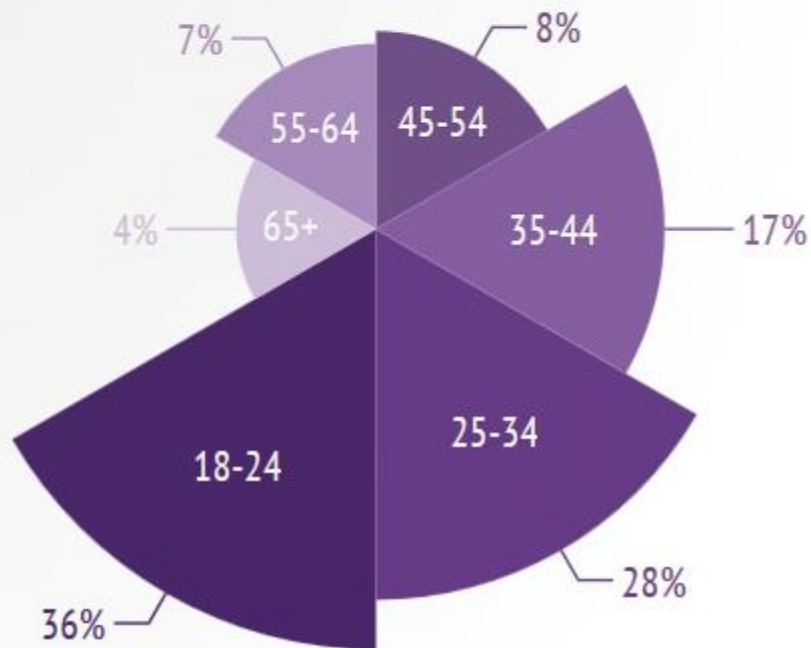
24%
Average Proportion
of Female Visitors
Worldwide

Countries with
High Proportion
of Female Visitors

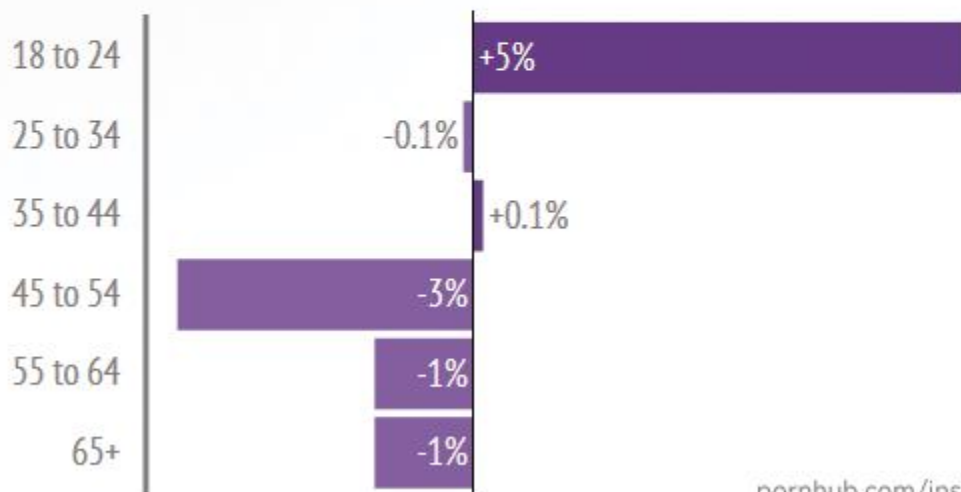


pornhub.com/insights

PROPORTION OF FEMALE VISITORS BY AGE GROUP



Proportional size of age groups as compared to men.



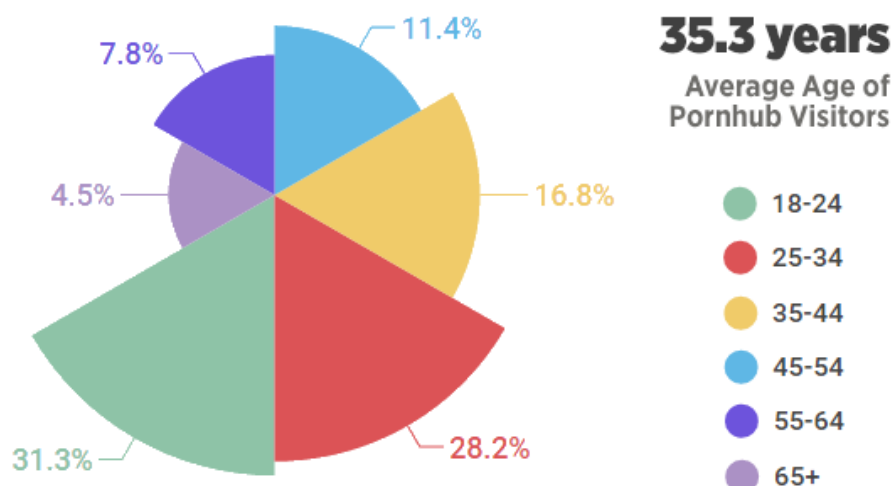
[pornhub.com/insights](https://www.pornhub.com/insights)

2015 YEAR IN REVIEW

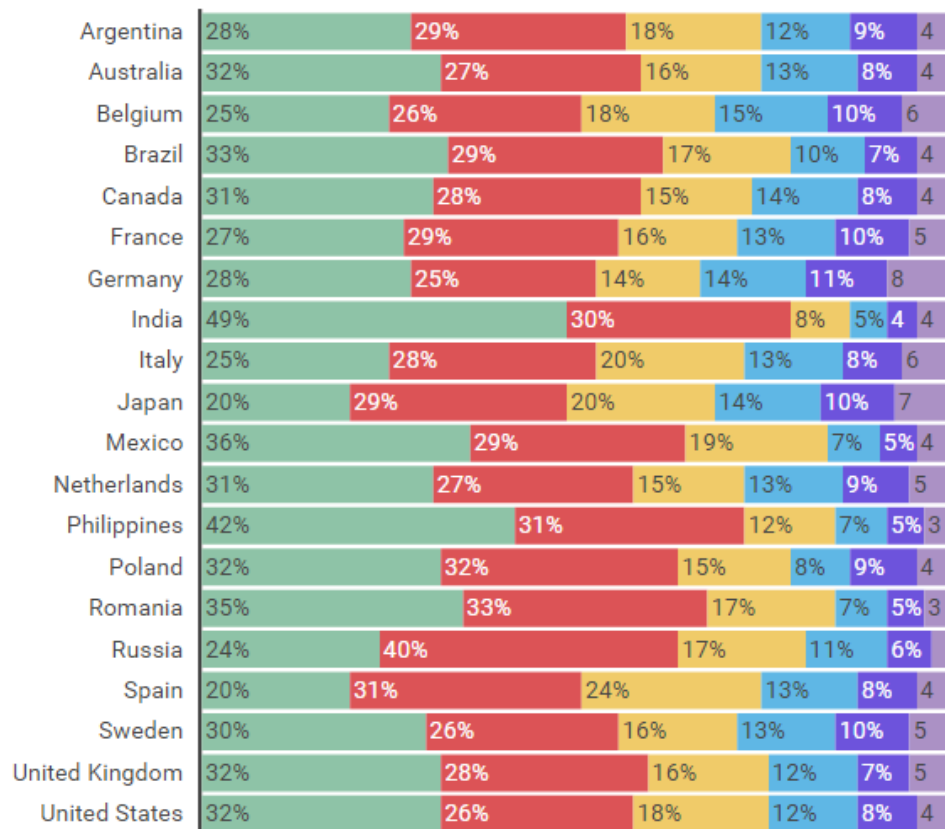
AGE DEMOGRAPHICS

Pornhub

Age Proportions Worldwide



Age Proportions in Top 20 Traffic Countries



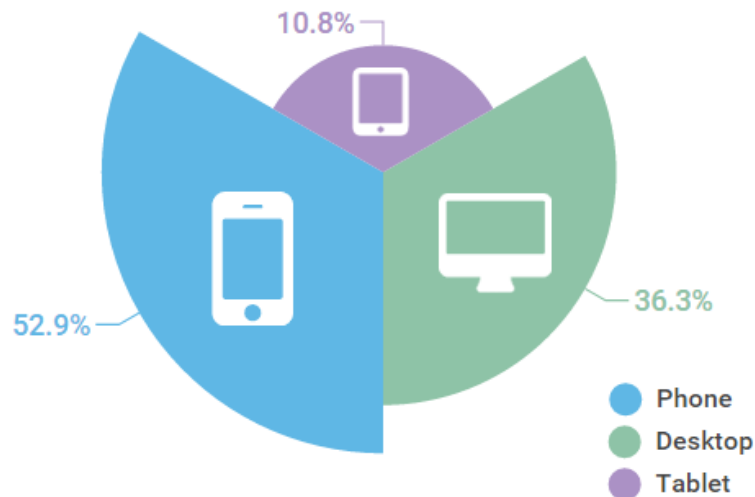
pornhub.com/insights

2015 YEAR IN REVIEW

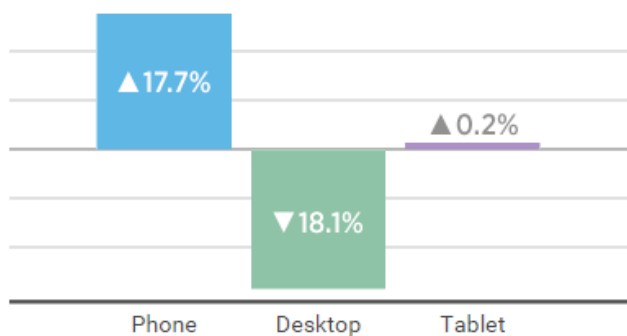
Traffic by Device Worldwide

Pornhub

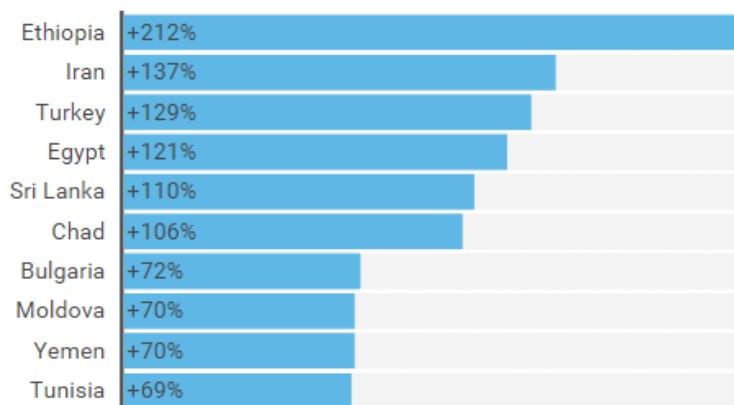
Proportion of Phone, Desktop and Tablet



Change in Traffic Share from 2014 to 2015



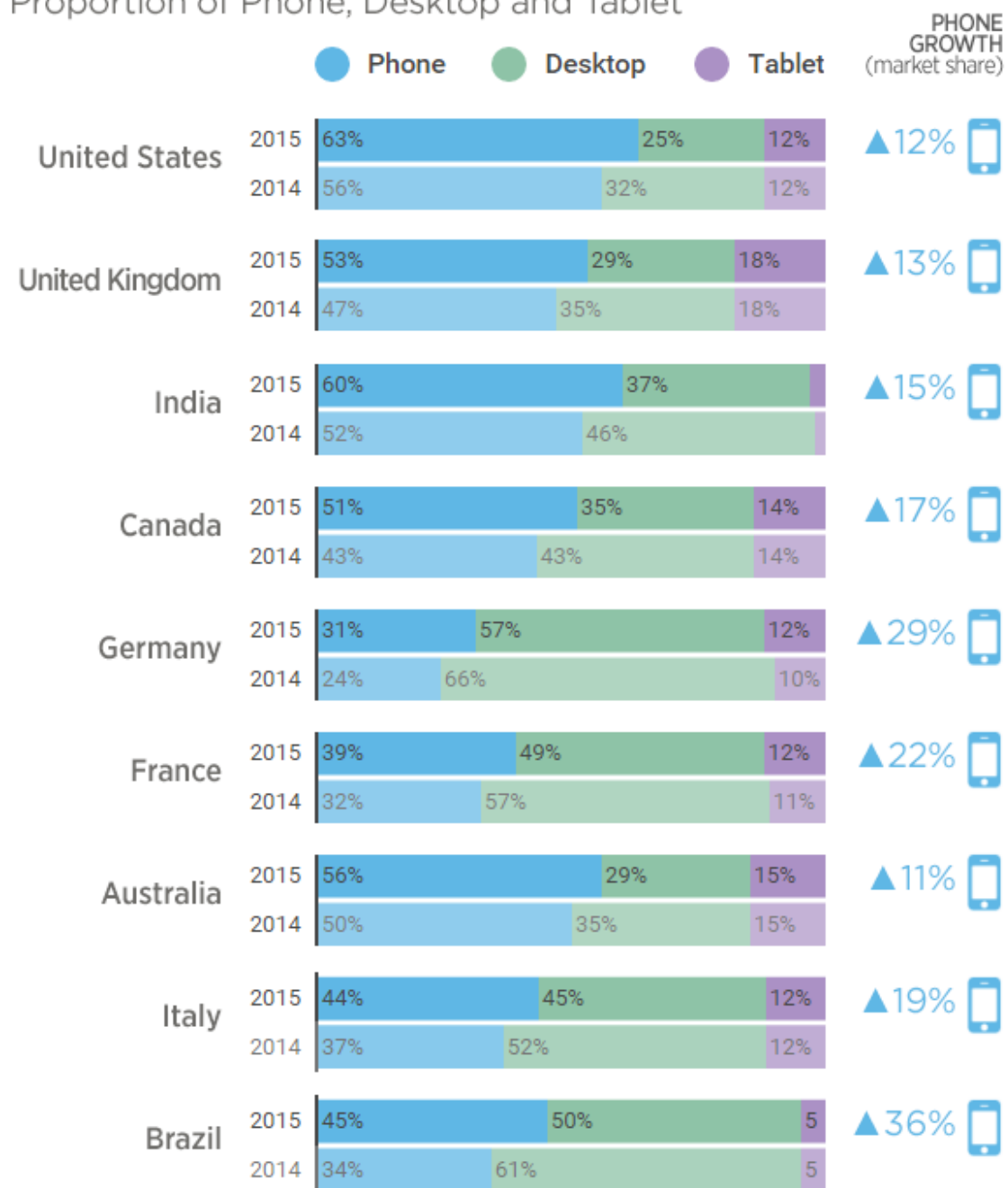
Countries with Increases in Mobile Traffic Share



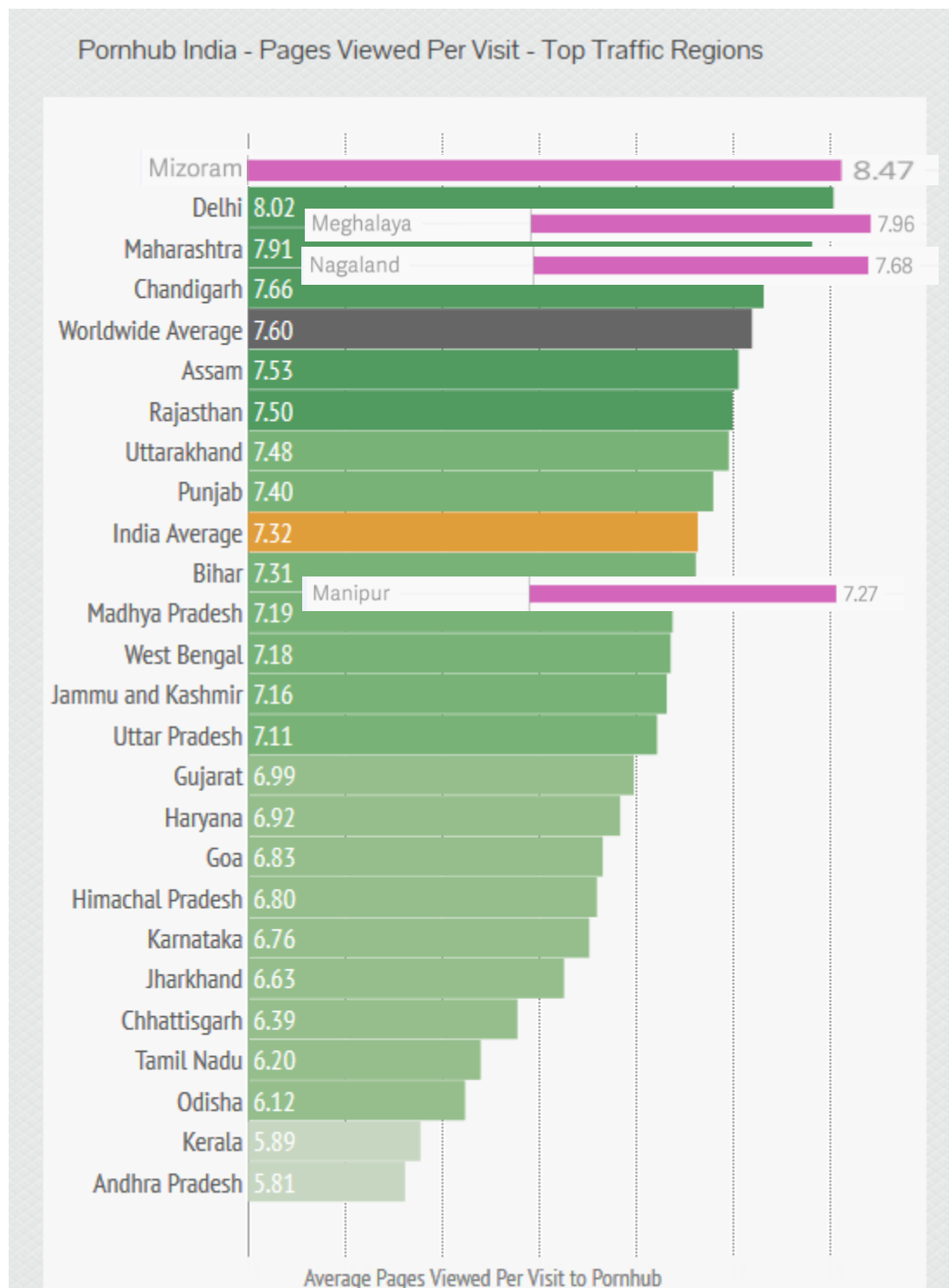
Traffic by Device

Pornhub

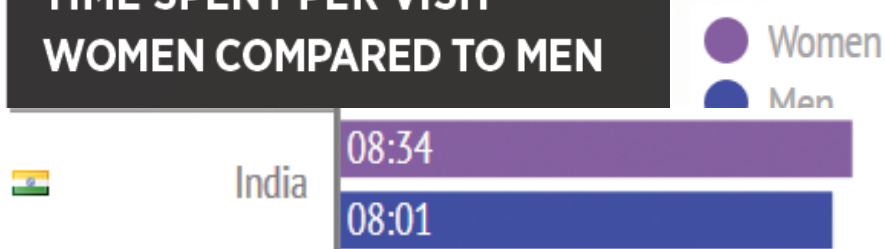
Proportion of Phone, Desktop and Tablet



(The pink bars have been added to fill in the missing data. Source: qz.com)



TIME SPENT PER VISIT WOMEN COMPARED TO MEN



PORN & HUMAN TRAFFICKING: AN INTERNET EPIDEMIC (Infographic)

<http://fightthenewdrug.org/the-internet-can-be-a-very-unsexy-place-we/>



HUMAN SEX TRAFFICKING IS:

“

commercial sex acts induced by **FORCE, FRAUD, or COERCION** or commercial sex acts in which the individual induced to perform commercial sex has **NOT ATTAINED 18 YEARS** of age

”

THE WORLD'S LARGEST ILLEGAL TRADE COMMODITIES



Drugs



Weapons



Humans

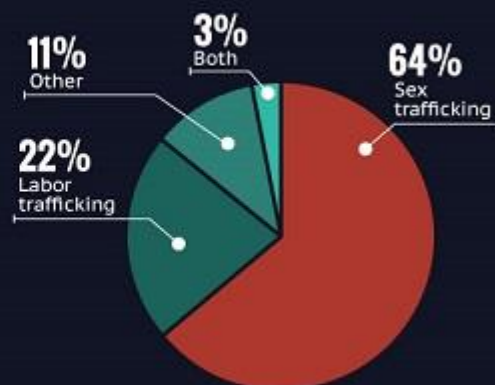
The sale of humans might be third on the list, but this industry is growing faster than the sale of drugs and weapons.



In 2000, the UN adopted the **PALERMO PROTOCOL**. This prevents, suppresses, and punishes trafficking in persons, especially women and children.



Since then, sex trafficking has become illegal in more than **140 COUNTRIES**



Two-thirds of calls to the National Human Trafficking Resource Center concern sex trafficking.

A HUMAN SEX TRAFFICKING VICTIM IS:



FACELESS

Less than 1% of the world's 21,000,000 victims are identified.



YOUNG

The average age of victims trafficked into prostitution is between 12 and 14 years.

300,000 U.S. teens become victims of sex trafficking every year.

VULNERABLE



Four out of every five victims are female.



Half of all victims are children.

HEADED FOR AN EARLY GRAVE



The average life expectancy of a female victim of sex trafficking. Homicide and AIDS are the top two killers.



In 2013, three out of five child sex trafficking victims saved by the FBI in a nationwide raid were from foster care or group homes.



One in three runaways are approached by sex traffickers within just two days of living on the street.

A HUMAN SEX TRAFFICKING OFFENDER IS:

OFTEN A PIMP



Two in every five sex trafficking cases referred to the National Human Trafficking Resource Center concern pimp-controlled prostitution.

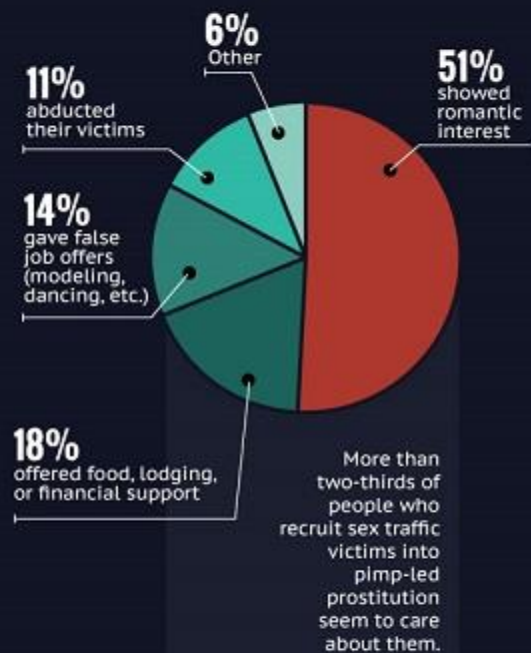
HANDED A LIGHT SENTENCE

- ▶ Angel Campos Tellez organized a prostitution ring of more than 100 trafficked women on the East Coast between 2009 and 2012. He plead guilty and was sentenced to 3.5 years in jail in 2013.
- ▶ Freddy Soriano Leguisamon was charged in Maryland with 54 counts of general prostitution and 13 human trafficking offences in 2013. He was sentenced to 3 years in jail.
- ▶ Nery Najarro-Rodriguez, Jorge Perez-Hernandez, and Luis Mata were charged for involvement in a prostitution ring made up of trafficked Mexican women, who were each sold to as many as 20 clients in a day. In 2013, they were each sentenced to serve 3 years in a county jail.

In many states, promoting prostitution is a **MISDEMEANOR** and victims are often too **SCARED** to testify they've been trafficked.

SOMEONE WHO SEEMS TO CARE

METHODS USED BY PIMPS TO RECRUIT SEX TRAFFICKING VICTIMS



WEALTHY



The American sex trafficking industry is worth \$3 billion a year.

SOMEONE YOU WOULDN'T EXPECT

“

There is no one profile of a trafficker. Essentially, human traffickers can be anyone who is willing to exploit another human being for profit.

Polaris Project

”

A HUMAN SEX TRAFFICKING CUSTOMER IS:

YOUR AVERAGE JOE

“Many of the biggest trafficking consumers are developed nations, and men from all sectors of society support the trafficking industry.”
Live Your Dream



AWARE OF WHAT HE'S DOING



Two out of every three men who pay for sex know the majority of prostitutes are "coerced, tricked, or trafficked."

UNAWARE OF THE NEED TO RESPECT WOMEN



The U.S. Department of Justice prosecuted 4x more child sex traffickers in 2013 than it did five years earlier.

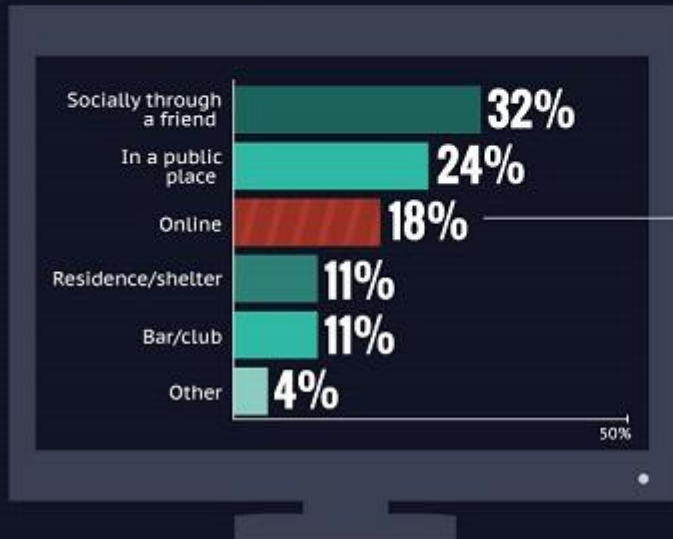
However, there's still much to be done, especially in Africa and the Middle East.



40% OF COUNTRIES
In this region had no sex trafficking convictions between 2006 and 2007.

WHAT'S THE INTERNET GOT TO DO WITH IT?

The Internet gives sex traffickers an edge, as they can anonymously recruit and sell their victims.



Between 2007 and 2012, online recruitment was the third most popular method for pimp-led prostitution, according to the National Human Trafficking Resource Center.



The Polaris Project says the Internet is the **NUMBER ONE** platform pimps, traffickers, and customers use in order to buy and sell sex with women and children in the U.S.



Nearly three-quarters of sex traffic survivors were advertised online on sites like Backpage and Craigslist.

ONE IN TWENTY U.S. men have bought sex online.



In Houston, TX, this figure jumps to **ONE IN FIVE**.

In January 2014

Authorities in the Philippines raided two fake call centers which sold online pornography featuring adults and children as young as 12. They detained 11 people on charges of child pornography and human trafficking.

In January 2014

An Ottawa teenager was charged with 30 offences including human trafficking, forcible confinement, sexual assault, and distributing child pornography. She used Facebook and other social media sites to befriend and then recruit her 13- to 17-year-old victims.

In February 2014

Oklahoma's Terrance Cortez Whitfield was charged with sex trafficking activity with a 15-year-old girl. He used the Internet to maintain his prostitution business.

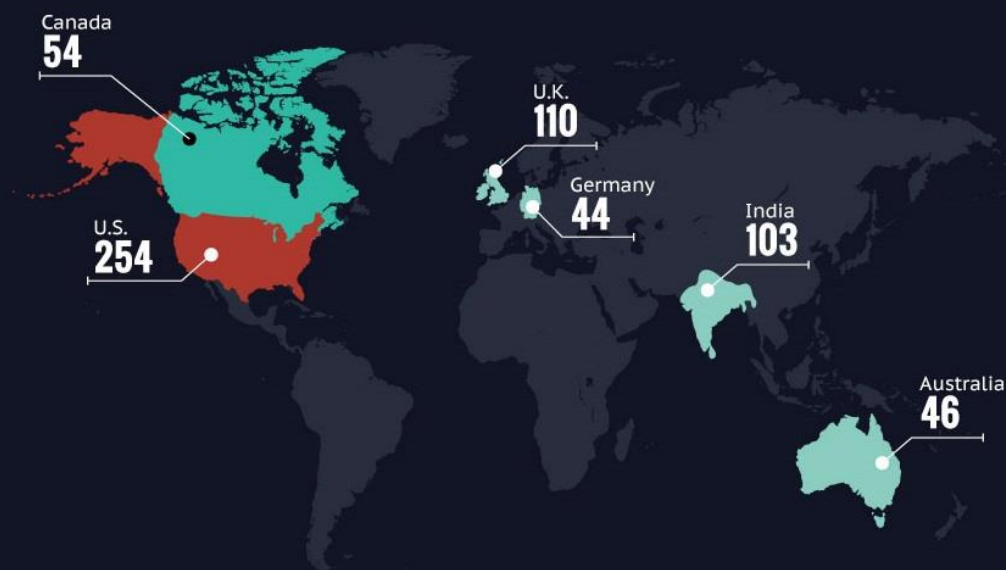


THE INTERNET IS ALSO HELPING THE AUTHORITIES AND ADVOCATE GROUPS CATCH SEX TRAFFICKERS.

In late 2013, Terre des Hommes Netherlands launched Project Sweetie to expose web cam sex tourism.



In 2 months, 1,000 men across 71 different countries were willing to pay 10-year-old "Sweetie" to strip on camera, including many from developed nations. Their details were passed to Interpol.



AUTHORITIES ARE ALSO:

- ▶ Tracking digital footprints.
- ▶ Using facial recognition to match missing persons to online sex ads.
- ▶ Using software to look for clues in online ads.
- ▶ Posting fake online ads to lure johns willing to pay for sex trafficked children.

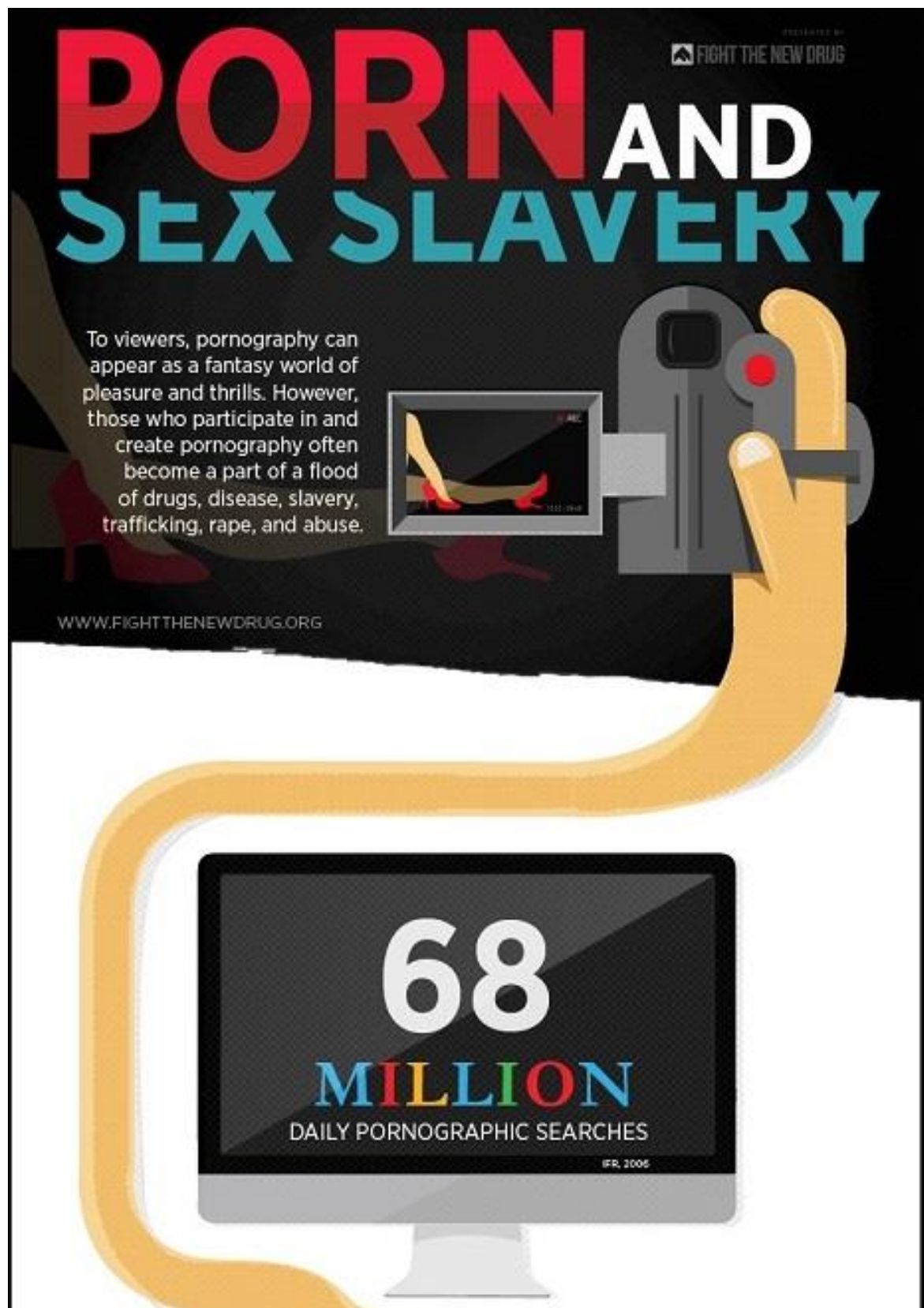
UNE UNIVERSITY OF
NEW ENGLAND

www.socialwork.une.edu

(Click on the article link for references)

How Porn & Sex Slavery Are Connected (Infographic)

<http://fightthenewdrug.org/porn-sex-slavery-infographic/>





Tanya Ex-Porn Actress

They treat us as though we are just a piece of meat. That we don't have a mind and our body is everybody's and we have no spirit. Guys punching you in the face... You're viewed as an object and not as a human with a spirit. People don't care. People do drugs because they can't deal with the way they are being treated... You have to numb yourself to go on set. The more you work, the more you have to numb yourself. The more you become addicted, the more your personal life is nothing but drugs. Your whole life becomes nothing but porn.

www.thefablabber.com/former-porn-star-jersey-josh-story



Megan Ex-Porn Actress

I got the &*& kicked out of me ... Most of the girls start crying because they're hurting so bad ... I couldn't breathe, I was being hit and choked. I was really upset and they didn't stop. They kept filming. [I asked them to turn the camera off] and they kept going.

Arns, H. (2001). A rough trade. *The Guardian* (U.K.), March 17.



88%

OF PORNOGRAPHIC FILMS CONTAIN
PHYSICAL VIOLENCE TOWARD WOMEN

Aggression and Sexual Behavior in Best Selling
Pornography Videos: A Content Analysis Update.
Violence Against Women 16, 10: 1065-1085.



11 YEARS OLD

AVERAGE AGE OF FIRST EXPOSURE TO HARDCORE PORN

APA. *Handbook of Sexuality and Psychology*. Hall, Gorman, and Linz



Linda Ex-Porn Actress

I literally became a prisoner, I was not allowed out of his sight, not even to use the bathroom, where he watched me through a hole in the door... He slept on top of me at night, he listened to my telephone calls with a .45 automatic eight shot pointed at me. I was beaten physically and suffered mental abuse each and every day thereafter."

Lovell, Linda; McGrady, Mike (2006). *Order*. Citadel Press. p. 7.



25%

OF INTERNET SEARCHES
ARE PORN RELATED

IFR, 2008



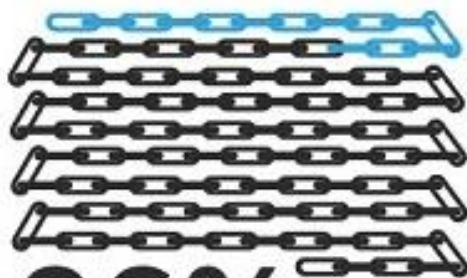
PORNOGRAPHY IS LITTERED WITH GIRLS WHO ARE ABUSED AND/OR SEX TRAFFICKED



Ashley Sex Trafficking Victim

When Ashley was 12-years-old she got into a fight with her mother and ran away from home. She ended up staying with her friend's older brother at his house and intended to go home the next day, but when she tried to leave he told her that he was a pimp and that she was now his property. He locked her in a room, beat her daily, and advertised her for sex on websites. Once, she looked out a window and saw her mother on the street, crying and posting flyers with Ashley's photo. When Ashley tried to shout her mother's name from the window her pimp grabbed her by the hair and yanked her back, threatening 'If you shout, I'll kill you.'

U. S. Department of State: Trafficking in Persons Report 2012



86% OF TRAFFICKED
WOMEN

IN THE U.S. REPORTED BEING PHYSICALLY
ABUSED BY PIMPS AND TRAFFICKERS

Sex Trafficking of Women in the United States:
Raymond, Hughes



**\$99
BILLION**
ANNUAL PROFIT ON
SEXUAL EXPLOITATION
The ILO report: Profits and Poverty:
The Economics of Forced Labour 2014



Dai Sex Trafficking Victim

I was involved in trafficking for more than six months. I compare that time to being held hostage in a timeless existence where my mind engaged itself in disassociation with my soul. This mental state was the only way in which I could keep any sanity. Repeatedly, I witnessed the beatings, rapes, and murders of innocent women. At times, my tears of hopelessness would drown me into a pathos of my own execution.



Maria Sex Trafficking Victim

Maria Elena was 13 years old when a family acquaintance told her she could make ten times as much money waiting tables in the United States than she could in her small village. She and several other girls were driven across the border, and then continued the rest of the way on foot. They traveled four days and nights through the desert, making their way into Texas, then crossing east toward Florida. Finally, Maria Elena and the other girls arrived at a rundown trailer where they were forced into prostitution. Maria Elena was gang-raped and locked in the trailer until she agreed to do what she was told. She lived under 24-hour watch and was forced to have sex with up to 30 men a day. When she got pregnant, she was forced to have an abortion and sent back to work the next day.

U. S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report 2012*

There is no difference between trafficking and prostitution when innocent women and children are being harbored for the sole purpose of the commercial sex trade. Exploiters and pimps are always violating the rights of these victims who are pursuing their freedom to escape from harm.

www.stophumantrafficking.wordpress.com/a-survivors-story/



98%
OF SEX SLAVES ARE
WOMEN

International Labour Organization, *Minimum Estimate of Forced Labour in the World*

**CLICKING IT
IS SUPPORTING IT**

#STOPTHEDEMAND



THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO WATCH PORN AT WORK IS INSANE

<http://fightthenewdrug.org/the-number-of-people-who-watch-porn-at-work/>

This week, [British news](#) broke that four judges in the U.K. were fired for watching porn on court computers. The U.K.'s Judicial Conduct Investigations Office said that while the porn that was viewed was not illegal, the judges' actions were an "inexcusable misuse of their judicial I.T. accounts" and was "wholly unacceptable conduct for a judicial office holder."

But these men are not alone. Not even close. One [guy in Baltimore](#) was recently canned for watching 39 hours of porn on his work computer over a two week period. That was nearly half of his total time on the job and equated to almost \$2,000 in wages.

All we can say is wow.

Unfortunately, this behavior is just a fact of life in this day and age. We live in a generation where the most hardcore porn is completely free and available 24/7 with just the click of a mouse. Because of this, more and more people are putting their jobs at risk by looking at porn during work hours.

In 2010, the Nielson Company [reported](#) that within the span of just one month, more than 21 million Americans accessed adult websites on work computers. That's 29 percent of working adults who viewed porn at work. And that was just one month. On average, the workers who looked at adult websites spent about an hour and 45 minutes on the sites within that month and the average time *per session* spent looking at porn as 12 minutes and 38 seconds.

Finally, it was stated that "adult sites" were the fifth most accessed category by workers.

Once again, this was all just recorded in only a one month span.

Talk about a good use of time and going the extra mile at your job. *Eye roll*

And it gets worse. A lot worse.

Since the Nielson study was only a report of one month, let's talk about the entire scope of the issue. According to the [Society of Human Resource Management](#), 70 percent of all online pornography access occurs between 9 AM and 5 PM, translating to the fact that 1-in-5 employees access porn at work.

And we're not done yet.

In a 2014 [study](#) of male porn users, researchers focused on the risks that they took to keep viewing pornography. Specifically, the survey asked how often the men viewed porn at work. This is what they found:

Because most companies have a zero tolerance policy for looking at porn at work, (i.e. if you get caught looking at porn at work you get fired) viewing porn at work is a significant risk of harm. Yet, over one-half (52%) of men age 18-30 admit to risking their careers and livelihood by viewing porn at work within the past 3 months. The numbers are even higher for men ages 31-49, with nearly three-fourths (74%) watching porn at work. In addition, 14% of men ages 18-30 and 20% of men ages 31-49 admitted that they viewed porn more than 10 times at work in the past 90 days.

It goes without saying, this is a huge issue.

Science has shown that pornography is [addictive](#) and harms the brain of the user. And not only does it harm the viewer, but has serious negative effects on their relationships and their [sex life](#). And besides the obvious fact that porn just a giant waste of time, viewing it can also make you depressed, give you anxiety, and make you perform [worse at your job](#).

Need we say more?

Not only is it a bad idea to watch porn at work, but it's a bad idea to watch it at all.



THE PERCENTAGE OF 12-YEAR-OLDS WHO ADMIT BEING ADDICTED TO PORN WILL SHOCK YOU...

<http://fightthenewdrug.org/the-percentage-of-12-year-olds-who-admit-being-addicted-to-porn-will-shock-you/>

It's no secret that our generation is the first to be dealing with the ability to access the most hardcore porn imaginable on a device that fits into our pockets with the click of a button. Pornography is available 24/7, 365 by any man, woman, or child of any age with access to the internet. So what is this doing to our society?

A [recent study](#) conducted by the NSPCC ChildLine found that a *tenth* of 12 to 13-year-olds fear they may be addicted to pornography. That's right, a whopping 10% of kids who just started 7th grade are saying they are already watching porn to the point where they are concerned and don't feel like they can stop. Why is this happening, and why at such an early age? It's all about accessibility and desensitization.

Dame Esther Rantzen, founder of ChildLine, reports the following: "Young people are turning to the internet to learn about sex and relationships. We know they are frequently stumbling across porn, often unintentionally, and they are telling us very clearly that this is having a damaging and upsetting effect on them."

(Related: [Why 12-Year-Old Girls Are Having Sex Rougher, Earlier](#))

One boy told ChildLine he didn't think pornography was affecting him until he realized he might not get married if he kept thinking about girls differently. One girl reported being assaulted at age 12 by her boyfriend, who was addicted to pornography.

Online exposure to pornography is becoming more and more common. Will Gardiner, CEO of Childnet and Director of the UK Safer Internet Centre, said, "It can be difficult for parents to face the fact that their child might come across pornography, but the reality is that pornography is relatively easy to find online, and children are being exposed at a younger and younger age."

Desensitization is another reason children this young are potentially becoming addicted. ChildLine found that 1-out-of-5 12 to 13-year-olds think watching porn is normal behavior and a part of everyday life. But guess what? Porn is not normal—[no matter what Buzzfeed is telling us](#).

It's happening, and it's happening fast. The rate at which porn is seeping into every crevice of the internet [will only continue to increase](#). So how do we fight something that is so virally available? A big part is getting rid of the stigma. Rantzen says talking about sex, love, consent, and relationships can help steer children away from researching online. Improved education will help foster healthy relationships and show porn is anything but normal.

By being educated and raising awareness on the harmful effects of pornography, we can make a change in society that protects our health, our relationships, and our world as a whole. Science and research have spoken: porn is harmful. Instead of building a culture where kids who haven't hit puberty yet are addicted to watching sex online, let's build one that promotes realistic sexuality and real love.

2015'S MOST POPULAR GENRE OF PORN IS EXTREMELY DISTURBING, TO SAY THE LEAST

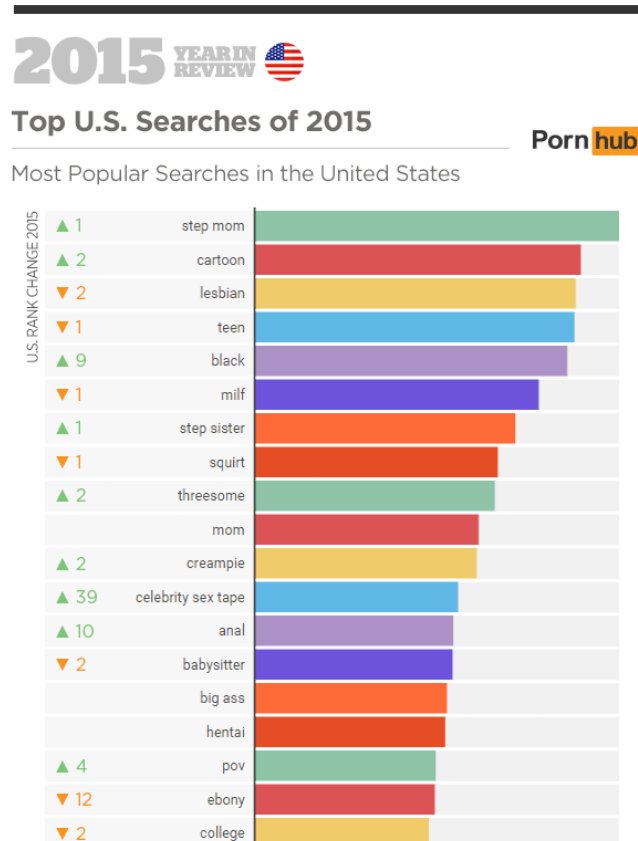
<http://fightthenewdrug.org/2015s-most-popular-genre-of-porn-is-extremely-disturbing-to-say-the-least/>

The reality of the digital age that we live in is that internet porn is more vast and varied than just about anything else that can be found on the internet. We are the first generation to be completely bombarded with graphic sexual material every time we hop online. Think about it, what other time in human history has there been unlimited access to videos of every sex act imaginable (and unimaginable) with the click of a button on a device that fits into our pockets? Never. That is why we are experiencing a very harmful "porn culture" that has consumed our society, making porn seem like part of every day life.

In 2015, porn has truly become mainstream. To see the reality of that statement, one needs to look no further than the annual report that mega porn site Pornhub releases at the end of every year... People spent 4.3 billion hours on Pornhub last year, which means 21.2 BILLION visitors watched 87.8 billion videos. Pornhub boasts that this figure equates to if every single human being on the planet (man, woman, teen, child, infant) viewed 12 videos each.

But we knew that lots of people watch porn. It seems to be completely normalized in our society today, so it's no surprise that these massive porn archives are getting insane amounts of traffic. What's really concerning is what these viewers are watching while they are there.

So what is the top most searched porn term in 2015 [in US]?



Yes, you read that right. *'Step mom'* is the subject of the most searched porn in the U.S. for the year of 2015.

This means that there is a massive porn genre dedicated entirely to women who look like mothers and are somehow related to the male on screen. Not only is this a disturbing scenario, it's just plain weird. It's also equally, if not more disturbing to point out that the term *'step sister'* is not far below at #7 on the list of most searched porn.

And not surprisingly, Pornhub seemingly takes pride in its users' deviant tastes, saying in their annual report: *"Family favorite 'step mom and son' jumped an astonishing 71 places, making it the 15th most searched term on Pornhub, in the world."*

Now, after seeing this data, here is what people should be thinking about: if millions of people across the globe are constantly searching and viewing porn involving these basically incestuous scenarios, what do you think it is doing to their sexual tastes and expectations? Is it fair to assume that this massive viewing and demand for the "step mom" and "step sister" genre is making the porn user think that sex with family members is okay? Or that if you are not *technically* related to someone, that it is somehow easier to have sex with them?

Due to the science and research on porn's effects on rearranging and [rewiring people's sexual template](#), we can tell you that this is a concerning trend to be seeing about our society. Unfortunately, porn has become a powerful and common version of sex education for many people. And what's dangerous is that this distorted form of education is being delivered in a way perfectly tailored to how our brains learn. Here's how:

Studies have shown that images are an especially powerful teacher, since they can pack in a whole lot of information that the viewer can understand very quickly. And while words are often interpreted as opinions, our brains are more likely to interpret images as facts; after all, it's a lot harder to argue with something you're seeing happen right in front of you. Now here's the kicker: [research](#) has shown that our brains learn better when they're sexually aroused. When you add in the focused concentration of searching through pornographic images to find exactly what the user is looking for, and reinforcing what's being taught with the reward of sexual climax, it creates the perfect conditions for teaching and conditioning the brain.

"It's sad," said Dr. Gary Brooks, a renowned psychologist at Texas A&M who specializes in studies on porn's negative effect on men. "Boys who are initiated in sex through these images become indoctrinated in a way that can potentially stay with them for the rest of their lives."

Well there you have it. Pornography is literally cultivating a generation of people who find the concept of step family members to be the most sought after object for sexual arousal.

Sound like a world you want to live in?

Not us.

GROWING UP FAST: WHY 12-YEAR-OLD GIRLS ARE HAVING SEX ROUGHER, EARLIER

<http://fightthenewdrug.org/growing-up-fast-why-12-year-old-girls-are-having-sex-rougher-earlier/>

This article was [originally posted in Australian Women's Weekly](#).

Few things are certain in adolescence, but there's one thing upon which teenage girls agree: pubic hair is out.

"Everyone shaves. Everything," says 16-year-old Anne*. "If you've left it you are classified as disgusting. You'd be embarrassed for the rest of your life. Boys would [tease you], call you hairy. People start shaving in [7th grade]."

They know, or think they know, a few other things, too. That oral sex doesn't count as sex. That sending nude pictures via text or Facebook is the new flirting. That boys their age watch porn regularly, and demand from their girlfriends the sexual menu they see online – hairless, surgically-enhanced bodies, 'girl-on-girl action', and much, much more.

They are learning from the 21st century's version of sex education class: the internet; a more enlightening and forthcoming source than nervous parents and teachers. But these lessons are a dangerous mix of misinformation and distorted images of sexuality, which is contributing to behavior that can leave young women with deep psychological and physical scars.

Teenager girls are under more sexual pressure than ever before. The good news is we can help them through it, although that requires a few lessons of our own.

It's human nature to judge adolescents by our experience. It wasn't like that in our day, we scold. But for once, we are right – it really wasn't like that in our day.

For one thing, girls are becoming women earlier than they used to. Reasons range from better nutrition to obesity to the break-down of the family unit.

"When dads aren't around, they're more likely to move into puberty earlier," says parenting expert Michael Grose. "If it starts earlier, I imagine this would mean they are beginning to be sexually active earlier."

In the past 60 years, the age at which girls lose their virginity has dropped from 19 (when many women were just getting married in the 1950's) to 16-years-old, but many start much earlier. Dolly magazine's 2011 Youth Monitor found 56 per cent of teens first had sex between 13 and 15 years old, a figure backed up by an Australian study that found the age of girls' first sexual experience ranged from 11 to 17 years, with a median age of 14.

Anne Mitchell, the director of the Australian Research Center in Sex, Health and Society, says rates of oral sex are climbing. The center's latest survey of high school students, in 2008, also showed the number having sex with three or more people a year had increased significantly.

Most worryingly, there has also been a marked increase in unwanted sex, an experience that can have a long-term effect on how a woman feels about herself and her sexuality. "The main reasons are being too drunk or high, and pressure from a partner," Dr Mitchell says. "Alcohol [consumption] has gone up over time, too, and it's intimately connected to their sexual behavior."

Rates of sexually transmitted diseases are rising, especially in the 15-19 age group; in 2008, slightly more than 25 per cent of all chlamydia infections were in the 15- to 19-year-old age group, and girls were diagnosed at three times the rate of boys.

That's just the statistics; the anecdotal evidence is more frightening. Parenting expert Michael Grose says there is a casual attitude to oral sex. "I've heard stories from teachers of oral sex happening at school," he says. "My generation went behind the shed and had a smoke. It's been put to me that oral sex at school is like smoking. That's extreme, but I think extremes explain the norm."

This doesn't sound unusual to 16-year-old Anne. "Oral sex happens a lot, it's before losing your virginity," she says. "I had a 16th birthday party and apparently two people were doing it on my front lawn."

Technology has also changed the sexual landscape. Once upon a time we would sit by the phone, praying our crush would call and hoping our parents wouldn't listen in. These days, there's constant contact via SMS, Facebook, Twitter, and instant messaging. Parents have little, if any, ability to monitor the conversation.

Teens flirt online, often with people they have not met. "If there's a guy you're interested in from another school or something, you might 'like' one of his photos on Facebook and get talking to him," says 16-year-old Rebecca*. "I know lots of people who've hooked up that way." They create online games such as 'sneaky hat', in which naked teenagers cover themselves with a hat and post the photograph as the profile picture on Facebook.

Online flirting often becomes more daring, with one party – usually the boy – asking the other to send sexy pictures. "When you're in year seven or year eight, it's pretty big," says Rebecca. "It's more the younger years, they don't do [sex] in person, they do it on the internet. One girl was talking to a friend's older brother, she didn't know him in real life. She sent him photos. The guy will ask, and the girl will think about it, and she will eventually end up doing it."

Of course, this can go terribly wrong. "One girl's photo was passed around," says Rebecca. "I was sitting on the train and got a Bluetooth message and it was a picture of her. She sent it to one boy, he sent it to a friend, and he sent it around. She was fully naked. You couldn't see her face, but you knew who it was." Yet social media is far less harmless than another consequence of the internet; pornography. These days, it is available for free to who anyone who wants it. "I was watching it when I was about 13," one teenage boy, Mike* said. "It is so easy, all you do is type 'boobs' into Google."

A Sydney study found that almost half of all adults, like Mike, first watched pornography between the ages of 11 and 13. Further research found 92 per cent of the boys had been exposed to online pornography by age 16.

In a flooded market, the industry is producing more extreme material to get an edge. In her research into the impact of pornography, Melbourne researcher Maree Crabbe has found a trend towards sex that is rough, aggressive, and idealizes acts women don't enjoy in real life – gag-inducing oral sex, anal sex, physical and verbal aggression.

The industry admits this. One porn star told Maree actors were required to be rough with the girl, and take charge. "He had moved from lovey dovey sex, towards material where the pornographers want to get more energy ... '**** her to destroy her'".

For many boys, porn is their sex education. They copy what they see, and expect their girlfriends to be like the women in the film. "Young people have described to us again and again, that

pornography is shaping their sexual imaginations, expectations and practices,” says Maree. “We have had young men who have been genuinely surprised that when they enact what they see in porn, their partner doesn’t like what they were doing, because they’ve always seen women enjoy it on screen.”

Wolf, 40, now worries that “mine is probably the last generation to experience that sense of sexual confidence and security in what we had to offer. Being is not enough; you have to be buff, be tan without tan lines, have the surgically hoisted breasts and the Brazilian bikini wax – just like porn stars.”

Many young women take the sexual lessons from their teens into their 20s and beyond, as evidenced by the rush of young women towards breast enhancement and [genital surgery to look more like airbrushed porn stars]. “The issues that concern me are what the influence of porn seems to be meaning for young people’s capacity to negotiate free and full consent, and experience the kind of sexuality that can feel acceptable and pleasurable,” says Maree.

Arguably, there has never been a more confusing, stressful time to be a teenager.

Fight the New Drug is all about pro-love and pro-healthy sexuality. That is why we are anti-porn. [Porn is full of ideals](#) and beliefs that are completely opposite of what real relationships, real sex, and real love are like. Healthy relationships are built on equality, honesty, respect, and love. But in porn, it’s the reverse; interactions are based on domination, disrespect, abuse, violence, and detachment. [Our generation is the first](#) to deal with the issue of pornography to this intensity and scale. And, as we’ve seen with today’s society, if we don’t take a stand, the problem is only going to get worse and worse. By being informed and understanding porn’s harmful effects, we can make a much needed change to our perceptions about love, sex, and relationships.

WHY KIDS ARE WATCHING PORN TO LEARN ABOUT SEX

<http://fightthenewdrug.org/see-how-many-students-use-porn-to-learn-about-sex/>

Welcome to 2015.

According to [research by the National Union of Students](#) (NUS), the majority of students watch porn to learn about sex. They also reported that most students do not rate the sex education they receive in schools as effective.

The study surveyed more than 2,500 grade school and university students in the UK and found that 60% of kids watch porn to get more information about sex – despite almost 75% even admitting that it creates unrealistic expectations.

Of the students surveyed, 75% say the sex ed at their school was not practical and rated it as either fair, poor, or terrible. In addition to this, 50% of the kids say that issues they need to know about are not covered in class.

We'll leave you to form your own opinions about sex education in schools, but the real problem here is that kids are using porn as a substitute for it. This is a giant and scary problem in and of itself.

The unfortunate reality of society today is that whether they want to or not, the majority of teens today are getting some of their sex ed from porn. And [research](#) has repeatedly found that people who have seen a significant amount of porn are more likely to start having sex sooner and with more partners, and to engage in riskier kinds of sex, putting them at greater risk of getting sexually transmitted infections.

Basically, getting sex ed from porn is like taking drivers ed from a car chase in an action movie. Everything is completely unrealistic, exaggerated, and nothing like real life. Because of the fact that [porn is just one huge lie](#), it creates unrealistic expectations in relationships and totally destroys any sense of real love and intimacy.

Jane Lees, chair of the Sex Education Forum, said about the NUS findings: "Consent and relationship safety are real issues affecting students and sadly they are leaving school with little or no discussion on these topics having taken place."

It is so important to shine a light on the fact that if kids are not being taught at school or by their parents about real sex and real intimacy, then the porn industry is happy to take that responsibility; and nobody is going to like what they will be learning.

According to the students surveyed, the topics covered in class were less practical and more biology based, with things such as anatomy, puberty, sexual health, and contraception being the focus. While all those things are good to know, our generation today needs a little more in-depth knowledge. Porn provides that but in the most counterproductive and false way possible.

If porn is what kids are using to fill in the gaps in their sex ed, they are basically shooting themselves in the foot without even knowing it. Because porn is full of ideas and beliefs that are completely opposite of what real relationships, real sex, and real love are like. Healthy relationships are built on equality, honesty, respect, and love. But in porn, it's the reverse; interactions are based on domination, disrespect, abuse, violence, and detachment.

Even the experience of using porn is the opposite of what real romantic relationships are like. A real romantic relationship is about being with a person and falling in love with them; it's about emotional connection and trust. In real relationships you can feel a person there, you can smell them and hear them laugh. The physical pleasure of sex is connected to sharing a whole relationship. With porn, however, sex is about being alone, watching other people do things. It's about constantly searching for something new, constantly being shocked and surprised. Not cool. And not real life.

Going back to the study, to make matters even worse, less than 1/5th of schools discussed LGBT issues and 75% of the students felt the education they received was not diverse enough.

Jack Wallington, director of community at the Student Room, commented on the study, saying, "Students regularly report a general lack of practical advice and inadequate or incorrect information about sexuality, contraception and STIs – leaving a black hole of unanswered questions that are filled by friends and websites. We'd like to see greater standardization in sex and relationships education programs, and ones which directly address the needs of young people, instead of leaving them to hunt for pieces of the puzzle themselves."

We hear that. Because there is one inarguable fact: porn is a lie, not an education.



THE MOST COMMON WORD USED IN PORN SITE COMMENTS IS...

<http://fightthenewdrug.org/the-most-common-word-used-in-porn-site-comments-is/>

[Every year PornHub releases its annual report with staggering statistics of massive porn consumption across the globe.]

Now, as shocking as all that information is, want to know which one we found most interesting [in the annual statistics]?



Wow.

Now how ironic is that?

Right amongst words that we had to blur out because of their explicit and graphic nature, the most common word in porn site comment sections is the word 'love'. How ironic (and disturbing) is it that one of the main places that you get the *furthest* from real love is where the word pops up the most in people's online conversations? Now, granted, we realize that the word is probably being used in a much different context than we should associate 'love' with, but does that make it okay? Does it make it okay that this word, which is meant to describe selfless devotion and loyal adoration is the most common word on a site that shows nothing but the most warped and twisted version of it?

We don't think so. We know that real love is something that should be cherished, valued, and not cheapened by fake imitations like porn.

When it boils right down to it, [porn is just a cheap counterfeit](#) of what love really is: complete and total respect and care for another individual. You think that's what these porn site visitors are feeling for what they're watching? Not even close. Selfish desire and objectifying the human body is most definitely *not* love. It is actually the furthest thing from it.

POPULAR PORN DIRECTOR GIVES BEHIND-THE-SCENES LOOK INTO MAKING PORN

<http://fightthenewdrug.org/famous-porn-director-gives-behind-the-scenes-look-into-making-porn/>

This article was originally posted on [Men's Health](#) by Adam Glasser.

(Warning: the following article contains explicit sexual language and references that some might find offensive and/or triggering. Reader discretion is advised.)

To the typical civilian watching porn, the stars can come across as sexual superheroes. I know this because I was once a civilian watching a lot of porn. I still remember the thoughts that ran through my head back then. 'How does he do that? Jeez, his penis is big! Wow, look at her perfect body! She's insatiable!'

And that's a good thing. As a director, I hope that's what viewers are thinking when watching one of my movies. I plan, cast, shoot, direct, and edit them specifically to induce those type of thoughts. I create fantasies.

(Related: [Emails Between A Veteran And Rookie Porn Producer](#))

The problems start when viewers forget that these are fantasies and lose perspective. They have insecurities about themselves and their own sexual abilities. They start thinking things like, 'I wish my penis was that big! I wish my girlfriend would do that! I wish I could be that spontaneous and erect on demand!'

Well guess what? The porn you see on your computer or TV screens aren't an accurate reflection of what happens in real life. And I don't just mean your life, I'm talking about the porn actors creating all that impossible sex you're watching. You're only seeing a small fraction of what really went on.

Prepare to learn some hard truths.

Big Penises

Yes, most of the male performers in porn have large salamis. You may be impressed with their size, but you know who isn't as excited by a gigantic [penis]? The women in porn. There are only a certain percentage of women who can actually handle and enjoy an abnormally large bratwurst. I encounter situations like this constantly when I'm filming, and I see the signs when I watch others adult movies. There's the obvious grimace of pain on the actress' face—because he's way too big for her and it hurts. I usually edit out these "pain indicators," because at least for me, it's distracting. It takes away from the fantasy and just reminds you that these are actors doing a job, and sometimes that job can be a pain.

Marathon Sex

We have become accustomed to watching porn studs pound away at their co-stars for anywhere from 20 to 60 minutes. What you don't see is what happens before the cameras start rolling. Like the pill popping and penis injecting. In my experience, 95% of the male performers use some sort of erectile enhancement medication, and the ones who don't are at the bottom of the totem pole.

You only see the finished product, so you don't see all the stopping and starting that happens during a shoot. The breaks to eat and drink, or catch their breath, or regain an erection, which could also mean popping another pill or sticking another needle into the base of the performer's penis. There are bathroom breaks and re-lubing breaks and still-picture-taking breaks. It's endless. Truth be told, neither the male or female performers are actually going at it non-stop for anywhere near the periods of time that it seems.

(Related: [21 Year Old – I Had Porn Induced Erectile Dysfunction](#))

And while many of the male performers are able to last an abnormally long time, under what seem to be the most pleasurable of circumstances, there are consequences. I dare any man to have sex for long periods of time, 6 to 7 days per week, over a 60-day period. See what happens to your penis. Now imagine engaging in that amount of sexual activity over a period of years. With such a workload placed on it, the male performers' penis becomes desensitized to the point where many of them can't actually ejaculate while having sex. They need to pull out and reach orgasm manually, or even worse, they develop a tolerance for the erectile dysfunction medications and can't get it up at all, for work or play.

Spontaneous Anal Sex

Sex in porn is designed to look spontaneous, but nothing could be further from the truth. Especially when it comes to anal sex. Before a scene, female performers have a lot of advance prep, from doing several enemas, to reducing or eliminating food consumption anywhere between 4 to 12 hours before their call time. Think about that the next time you're watching [this genre of] porn—the actress is probably starving (on the set, we can almost hear her stomach growling) and she's had more enemas that morning than the residents of a nursing home.

Insatiable Sex Drive

Sure, there are female performers in it purely for the sex, but they are few and far between. My experience tells me that the majority of women are in porn for the money first, followed closely by the adulation, then the freedom, and then the sex. Some of them don't enjoy any of the sex. Some of them are strictly heterosexual and don't enjoy other girls. Some are lesbians and don't enjoy sex with guys. Some of them find many of the people they are asked to have sex with unattractive.

(Related Video: [Watch Jessica's Story – My Life As A Porn Star](#))

But they do it anyway, and they do it well. They have learned to fake it. Directors ultimately don't care as long as the performer has the ability to "act" as if she's enjoying everything she's doing, which the successful ones do. We know that with good shooting and some creative editing, you'll never be able to tell the difference.

Sex Without Condoms

Despite the fact that all performers are tested every 14 to 30 days, [curable STD's are rampant within the industry](#). I know of some performers who catch them so often, they have developed a tolerance for the treatment medications. This is not an indictment of the individuals involved, it is simply a numbers game. Any individual, in any setting, under any circumstances, who have had as much random unprotected sex as a porn star would experience the same.

- Adam Glasser (aka Seymore Butts) is a porn actor and director with over 100 movies to his credit. He's been the subject of a Showtime reality show, Family Business, and author of a sex guide for men.

This in-depth look at the reality of porn industry adds further proof to the facts that we are trying to promote in society. Porn is just one big lie that appears to be full of pleasure but in reality is just an empty world of drugs, disease, and abuse. Porn offers nothing even close to real relationships and real sexuality. As a result, people that are regularly exposed to porn are more likely than others to feel poorly about how they look and feel worse about how their partner looks. A real romantic relationship is about being with a person and falling in love with them and having sex to bond that relationship. With porn, however, sex is about being alone and watching other people do things. It's about constantly searching for something new, constantly being shocked and surprised. The more a person buys into the porn experience and its ideas, the harder it will be for them to have a real loving relationship or real sex life.

10 EX-PORN STARS SHARE THEIR MOST DISTURBING STORIES FROM WITHIN THE INDUSTRY

<http://fightthenewdrug.org/10-porn-stars-speak-openly-about-their-most-popular-scenes/>

As hard as it is for us to believe, there are many people in society who think that porn is just harmless entertainment and that porn stars truly are the “sex-craving goddesses” they are marketed to be. Regardless of all the [overwhelming research](#) and countless personal accounts exposing the [dark reality of the porn industry](#), many still buy into the fantasy that the porn industry works hard to maintain.

“*Porn hurts nobody.*” Such is the belief that many people in our society seem to have when it comes to pornography. However, perception is not always reality. The fact of the matter is that the porn industry is riddled with violence, drugs, abuse, and disease. And while active porn performers rarely, if ever, speak out due to fear of not getting work or being persecuted, the majority of those very same porn performers inevitably end up [speaking out on their real experiences once they leave the industry](#). These personal accounts are never pretty.

(Related: [VIDEO: Jessica’s Story – My Life As A Porn Star](#))

To put an end to the “glamorous” and “sexy” facade that so many people in society buy from the porn industry, we’ve assembled quotes from nine former porn actresses and their stomach-turning reflections on their time doing porn.

READER DISCRETION IS ADVISED: We did our best to find quotes that weren’t too explicit while still preserving the extreme nature of the stories. Regardless, many may find the following accounts to be graphic, disturbing, and triggering.

Alex

“[One particular film] was the most brutal, depressing, scary scene that I have ever done. I have tried to block it out from my memory due to the severe abuse that I received during the filming. The [male performer] has a natural hatred towards women, in the sense that he has always been known to be more brutal than ever needed. I agreed to do the scene, thinking it was less beating except a punch in the head. If you noticed, [he] had worn his solid gold ring the entire time and continued to punch me with it. I actually stopped the scene while it was being filmed because I was in too much pain.”

*FTND Note: In our research, we found that the viciousness of the film Alex is talking about caused the distributor to forego covering any further releases from the film studio. A critic on a popular porn review site wrote that the film was “one of the most morally repugnant pornographic movies I have seen” and “is the sort of movie that the government would cite when trying to arrest pornographers and outlaw pornography.”

Alexa

“Like most porn performers, I perpetuated this lie. One of my favorite things to say when asked if I liked doing a particular scene was, “I only do what I like! I wouldn’t do it if I didn’t like it!” (I would say this with a big fake smile and giggle.) What a total lie! I did what I had to do to get “work” in porn. I did what I knew would help me gain “fame” in the industry.”

*FTND Note: Vanessa Belmond (real name) is now outspoken on the harms of the porn industry and has been featured in several news sources. Click [here](#) to hear more of her story.

Jessi

"It was the most degrading, embarrassing, horrible thing ever. I had to shoot an interactive DVD, which takes hours and hours of shooting time, with a 104 degree fever! I was crying and wanted to leave but my agent wouldn't let me, he said he couldn't let me flake on it. I also did a scene where I was put with male talent that was on my 'no list'. I wanted to please them so I did it. He stepped on my head [...] I freaked out and started balling; they stopped filming and sent me home with reduced pay since they got some shot but not the whole scene."

Andi

"After a year or so of that so called 'glamorous life,' I sadly discovered that drugs and drinking were part of the lifestyle. I began to drink and party out of control – cocaine, alcohol, and ecstasy were my favorites. Before long, I turned into a person I did not want to be. After doing so many hardcore scenes, I couldn't do it anymore. I just remember being in horrible situations and experiencing extreme depression and being alone and sad."

*FTND Note: Andi left the porn industry in 2010 and joined the [Pink Cross Foundation](#), a group of ex-porn stars that speak out on the harms of pornography. However, in 2014, Andi announced on her Twitter page that she was returning to porn and planning "her comeback" in the industry.

Regan

*"I got the **** kicked out of me... most of the girls start crying because they're hurting so bad... I couldn't breathe. I was being hit and choked. I was really upset and they didn't stop. They kept filming. [I asked them to turn the camera off] and they kept going."*

Anita

"I have been a performer now for 14 years in the adult film industry in many countries, states . . . all over the place. I have worked for most of these companies, and I was around for the once-a-month HIV-positive outbreak in '98. Yes, I was, and I got to see those performers that nobody knows about—that nobody claims that got HIV, that are not a part of the statistics—walk out the door as non-performers, not to be counted. Yeah, there are a lot of cover-ups going on. There is a lot of tragedy. There are a lot of horrible things."

Elizabeth

"Of course I lied to my fans. I led them to believe I lived a fantasy life which was far from the truth. I fed into their fantasies. I said I wanted sex 24/7 and made it seem like I absolutely loved what I did and was living this happy life. I gave them hope and insight into their relationships by telling them what to do. I started to feel like an important nobody, they knew Elizabeth [the porn star], but they would never care to know Jan [the real me]. I had to do whatever the producer pleased and I had to accept it or else no pay. Sometimes you would get to a gig and the producer would change what the scene was supposed to be to something more intense and again if you didn't like it, too bad, you did it or no pay."

*FTND Note: Jan Meza (real name) eventually left the porn industry and now works with the Pink Cross Foundation to spread awareness on the harms of the porn industry and help other porn stars get out of the business.

Jessie

"People in the porn industry are numb to real life and are like zombies walking around. The abuse that goes on in this industry is completely ridiculous. The way these young ladies are treated is totally sick and brainwashing. I left due to the trauma I experienced even though I was there only a

short time. I hung out with a lot of people in the adult industry, everybody from contract girls to gonzo actresses. Everybody has the same problems. Everybody is on drugs. It's an empty lifestyle trying to fill up a void. I became horribly addicted to heroin and crack. I overdosed at least three times, had tricks pull knives on me, have been beaten half to death..."

enna

"It was torture for seven years. I was miserable, I was lonely, I eventually turned to drugs and alcohol and attempted suicide. I knew I wanted out, but I didn't know how to get out."

*FTND Note: Brittni Ruiz (real name) did eventually get out and now uses her story to spread awareness on the harms of the porn industry.

Genevieve

"The abuse and degradation was rough. I sweated and was in deep pain. On top of the horrifying experience, my whole body ached, and I was irritable the whole day. The director didn't really care how I felt; he only wanted to finish the video."



A 2012 SURVEY OF **177 PORN ACTRESSES**
DEMONSTRATED PORN STARS ARE MORE
LIKELY THAN THE GENERAL PUBLIC TO HAVE:

HAD MORE LIFETIME
SEXUAL PARTNERS
(**74 PARTNERS AVERAGE**)

FIRST HAD SEX
AT AN EARLIER AGE
(**AVERAGE: 15 YEARS OLD**)

MORE CONCERN
ABOUT CATCHING AN STD
(**AVERAGE: 8% CONCERNED**)

EVER USED:

MARIJUANA (79%)

HALLUCINOGENS (39%)

ECSTASY (50%)

COCAINE (44%)

METHAMPHETAMINE (27%)

HEROIN (10%)



FIGHT THE NEW DRUG

IS THERE A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PORN AND PROSTITUTION?

<http://fightthenewdrug.org/is-there-a-difference-between-porn-and-prostitution/>

The porn industry is one that has been shrouded in controversy for years. Whether it be the [horrific stories of ex-porn stars](#) telling what happened to them or the industry's [sketchy sexually transmitted disease testing methods](#), the "adult entertainment" industry has been at the center of many debates, and for good reason. One question that always seems to rise to the surface when talking about the porn industry is the difference between pornography and prostitution. Think about it. What is the difference between people getting paid to have sex and... people getting paid to have sex?

The answer?

There's really no difference at all.

Even the very meaning and origin of the word '*pornography*' tells the true story. Taken straight from the [Encyclopaedia Britannica](#):

The word pornography, derived from the Greek porni ("prostitute") and graphein ("to write"), was originally defined as any work of art or literature depicting the life of prostitutes.

That should sum it all up for anyone questioning the difference between porn and prostitution. But we'll keep going anyway.

Let's talk about how it is now a [popular trend](#) in the porn industry for porn stars to auction themselves off to fans who will pay to have sex with them on camera. Yes. That's a real thing. Last year, a porn website announced multiple auctions for fans to appear in a scene with popular porn actresses. With opening bids between \$2,500-\$3,500, the winners of the auctions were even required to pay for their own transportation to Las Vegas to claim their prize.

Sounds legit, right? **Eye roll**

The porn industry is quick to dispel the idea that what they are doing reflects prostitution in any way. They claim that the people being filmed are "actors" and "actresses" that are getting paid for their time to be on camera, and that what they are doing on film is just the nature of their work.

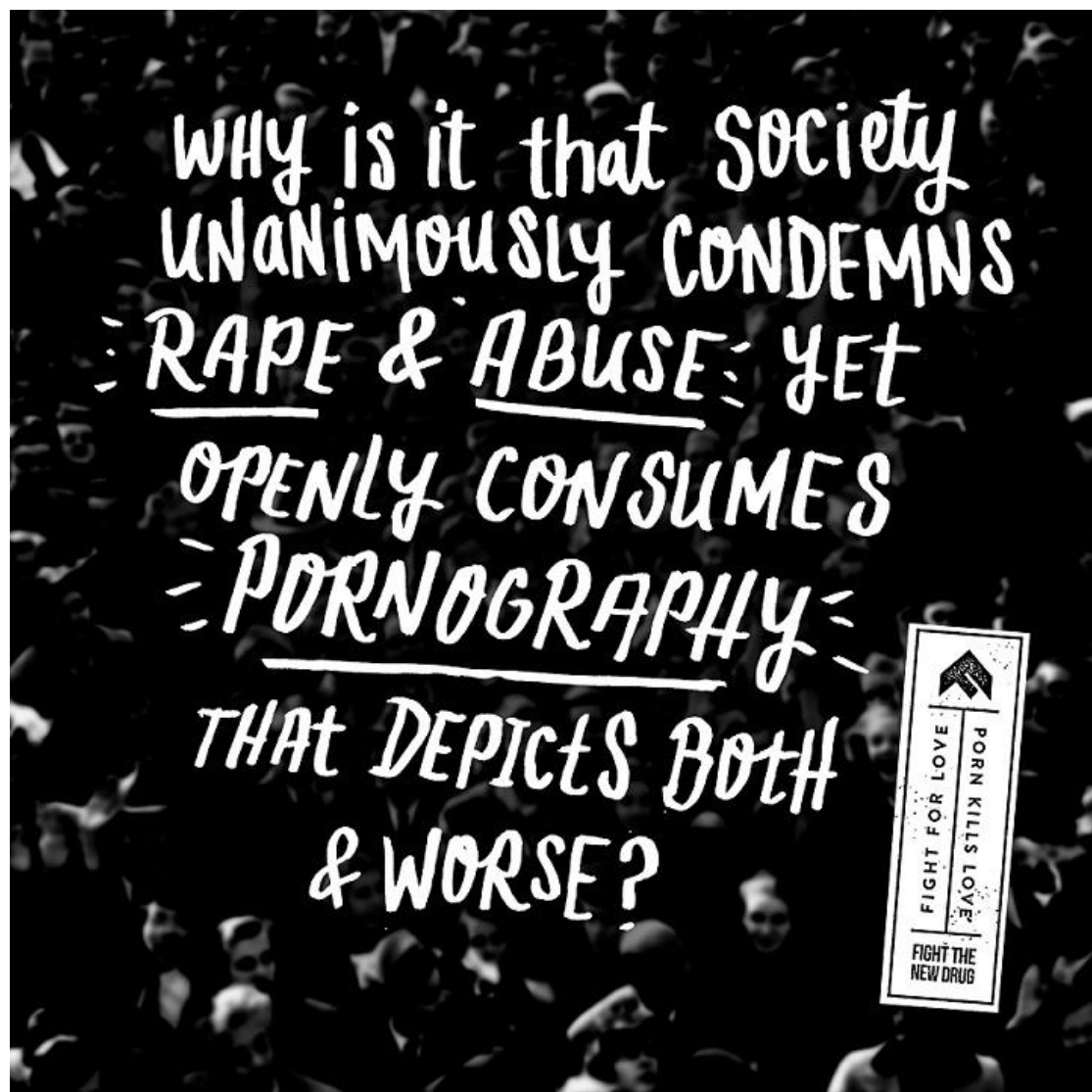
Right...

The fact of the matter is that there is really no clear cut distinction between porn and prostitution, just an extremely thin line of small print and technicalities. In reality, the link between porn and prostitution is inseparable. [Research](#) shows that men who go to prostitutes are twice as likely to have watched a porn film in the last year compared to the general population. It's also not surprising that when these customers show up, many come ready with porn images in hand to show the women they're exploiting what they want to do.

And they're not the only ones using porn as an illustration. "Pimps and traffickers use pornography to initiate their ... victims into their new life of sexual slavery," says Dr. Janice Shaw Crouse, a former UN representative and a senior fellow at the Beverley LaHaye Institute. Through exposure to porn, these victims "get hardened to accept the inevitable and learn what is expected of them."

Finally, in a [study](#) of 854 women in prostitution across nine countries, 49% said that porn had been made of them while they were in prostitution, and 47% said they had been harmed by men who had either forced or tried to force their victims to do things the men had seen in porn.

There is essentially no difference between pornography and prostitution. Society needs to understand that fueling the demand for pornography can only be harmful for individuals, relationships, and the world as a whole.



EMAILS BETWEEN A VETERAN AND ROOKIE PORN PRODUCER

<http://fightthenewdrug.org/emails-between-a-veteran-and-rookie-porn-producer/>

In an interview about his time in the industry, one [ex-porn producer](#) talked about the reality of producing porn, compared to the fantasy that most see. He said:

"What's appealing about a girl that's curled up in a fetal position in a corner sucking her thumb because her mind is so blown by what she's just done to herself that she doesn't know how to handle it? Because that's what porn is."

At Fight the New Drug, we've talked to hundreds of people who have worked in the porn industry and have also [gathered countless other personal accounts](#). To further shine a light on the dark reality of the porn industry, the following fictional email was written based on research and real accounts from within the porn industry.

**This is the first in a series of fictional emails from an experienced porn producer to a rookie porn producer.*

From: *****

Date: January 4, 2015, 11:16 AM

Subject: **Re: New guy questions**

Hey *****,

So ***** gave me your email and asked me to answer some questions for you before you start shooting for us. First off, welcome to the team. Get ready to make some serious cash here. We've got some insanely hot girls and they are willing to do literally anything we ask. Listen to my advice and you'll be shooting clips that get millions of views in no time.

Fresh meat

[We are big on recruiting on college campuses](#). Keep in mind that while most of the girls are so broke living away from home for the first time that they will jump at the money instantly, some girls can be harder to convince than others. I'll let you in on an industry secret: the key to recruiting is glamour. Make sure that the girls understand that they can make more money in a day working for you than they could working at their regular job in two weeks. [Make sure that they see the lifestyle we sell](#). When you pick them up, make sure it's in a nice car. When they come to your house, make sure they see all the nice toys you have. These chicks need to picture themselves living their dream.

Also, obviously don't forget to tell them how beautiful and sexy they are. Compliment which parts of them you like best and tell them that their big *** or nice ***** are going to make them a lot of money. They love that. They'll blush and smile and think that they actually have something special.

Cryers

It is just inevitable that you are going to get [girls who cry during shoots](#). It's honestly pretty annoying but it just happens. Especially for the girls starting out in the business, you're going to have to help them grow up. Most of my girls were "emotional" at the beginning of their careers, but I taught them

that they had to detach themselves from the sex in order to be successful. This isn't the love industry, this is the flesh business. Remind them of that.

It's all in your approach. If you do it right then they'll do whatever you want. Just let them know it's all business, and the more they are willing to do, the more money they'll make. (And so will you.)

Ex actors

This one drives me crazy but eventually it'll happen to you. As you make more and more videos, you'll have recruited hundreds of different girls. At some point, some of those girls are going to come back to you a couple of years later to demand that you remove their videos off our site. This happens usually because some fiancée, dad, church member, friend or whoever found their pictures online. Some girls will even offer you a ton of cash to take down their clips or even threaten to sue. Don't even worry, they all signed their contracts before shooting and we have a great legal team on hand just for things like this. Just tell the girl tough luck and tell her that once pictures and video are online, they are impossible to take down. Those pictures will be on the internet until the girls become grandmothers lol.

You'll also get a lot of your ex girls who will [start to speak out against what we do](#). But by that point we've already used them up and made our money so it's really not our problem.

*All right, I think that's about it for now. Let me know if you have any other questions. I'll check back with you in a bit to see how things are going. Let's you, me, and ***** go get lunch sometime soon.*

Talk to you later,

P.S. I forgot to mention, don't get involved with any of the girls. They might get too attached and that complicates things. Of course you can mess around with them if you want (that's one of the perks of the job lol) but don't go taking them on any dates or anything. They need to know their place in the business.

[The reality of porn](#) is that with some editing and off-screen coercion, pornographers can make it look like what's happening onscreen is being enjoyed. But the uncut version is a different story. Porn actors are constantly coerced and emotionally/verbally abused by agents and directors to force them into doing things they don't want to do.

VETERAN PORN PRODUCER GIVES ADVICE ON HIRING PORN STARS

<http://fightthenewdrug.org/veteran-porn-producer-gives-advice-on-hiring-porn-stars/>

The business of pornography is completely centered around appeal for its main consumer: males. Actors are often cast to fit the idealized situation of a gorgeous woman paired with an average guy to appeal to the millions of men watching. As journalist Edward Marriott sarcastically wrote,

"The ridiculous pornographic scenario of the pretty female hitchhiker (or driver with a broken-down car, or any number of similar such vulnerable roles) who is happy to let herself be gang-banged by a group of overweight, hairy-shouldered couch potatoes makes 'perfect' psychological sense."

This is one of the many fantasies that porn sells.

We've talked to many people [who have worked behind-the-scenes in the porn industry](#). To shine a light on the [dark reality of making pornography](#), the following fictional email was written based on research and real accounts from within the industry.

**This is the second [in a series of fictional emails](#) from an experienced porn producer to a rookie porn producer.*

From: *****

Date: January 30, 2015, 10:45 PM

Subject: More advice

Hey *****,

So I've watched some of your videos and they're pretty good, especially for a first-timer. You recruited some pretty hot girls. Nice work. But I gotta say, a lot of the male talent you got in your videos are way too pretty. You could seriously lower the number of views you get on your videos if you keep doing this. Let me explain to you a little more about what I'm talking about.

Our Demographic

ALL the porn that we produce is for men. All of it. We don't shoot that lame hippy "feminist porn" that people are doing now. Everything we do is all about what dudes want. Our job is to make them feel like they're living their own fantasies through our videos. To do this, we can't threaten them by having guys that are better looking than them in our videos.

I've attached one of my top rated videos at the bottom of this email. Notice how this girl is one of the hottest in the industry and the guy is just an average looking dude. See how he's even balding and has a gut lol. This way the guys watching our videos aren't intimidated and feel like they can do what we are shooting.

Also, it goes without saying that you really got to make sure the girls in your videos are going wild. They should always seem like they are ready and willing to get with these nasty guys lol. You know as well as I do that porn is every guy's dream because it's the only place where you can see thousands of hot chicks eager to please these average joe dudes.

I'll be out of town this weekend (headed to Miami baby!), but shoot me an email if you have any other questions and I'll get back to you when I can. I'll keep an eye out for your new videos!

Best of luck,

In porn, everything from the way people look to how and why they have sex is a lie. Porn users often get so obsessed with chasing something that isn't real that they miss out on actual relationships. For example, a typical 45 minute porn flick takes three days of filming to produce, but leaves the viewer with the impression that everything they just watched happened without a break. Porn also makes it look like no matter what a man does, the woman he's with is thrilled, even though the majority of sexual acts shown are degrading or violent. Not real life. And not cool.



MAKING MINDY A PORN STAR: CONFESSION OF AN EX-PORN PRODUCER

<http://fightthenewdrug.org/mindys-story/>

Note from writer: I must warn you that what I'm about to share with you is dark. If you are in need of a "pick-me-up," this story is not for you. For some, this article might be quite depressing. For others, it might be a wake-up call, causing them to think of a side of pornography they've never before considered. The latter is my intent. Also note that I have Mindy's permission, and indeed encouragement, to share her story.

– Donny

When you tell a person what they can't have, they'll often try to convince you that you're wrong. This is especially true for the college-aged, who have recently left the safety of the nest to spread their wings out on their own for the first time. When recruiting new porn actresses, I understood this very well and used it to my advantage.

I worked from a nice home, and I often let the house and our lifestyle do the selling for me. A new prospect would arrive after having driven through one of the better neighborhoods in town and, prior to sitting down to interview in my home office, would be shown around the property like a valued guest. My girlfriend and I had things the interviewee didn't have. The photos of us were taken at vacation spots where the girl likely hadn't been, and the "famous" people with whom we posed were people she'd recognize but likely hadn't met.

There were psychological reasons for this: I not only wanted her to feel comfortable in a warm, non-threatening environment, but I also knew she'd start painting herself into the picture. "Porn can give me this lifestyle?" she'd ask herself. "No, dear girl, this lifestyle isn't for you," I'd say, "You can't handle this business. What if your dad finds out you're working for me?" The more a college-aged girl was presented with questions like this, the more she'd argue that I was wrong and this life was something she could handle. When her life began falling apart, I could pat myself on the back for having warned her against getting involved in the first place.

A Natural

One December day, a girl named Mindy arrived at my house. She'd turned 18 barely a month before our interview. I wish I could deny playing the part I played in her story. For a long time after I left the porn industry, I simply didn't want to talk about it. *(Mindy is the reason my cell phone number has never been changed. She has it memorized and to this day she'll call when she's at her worst and has nowhere else to turn.)*

Back on that first day, I knew I had a moneymaker. I verified the age on her ID because, well, she looked really young. I'd already been in the business four years by this time, so I had a pretty good handle on the demands of the market. I knew men would go crazy over this girl.

I initially emailed samples to clients who owned websites. Every one of them either matched their largest order size, or ordered more of her than they had of any other model I'd submitted. One client who specialized in the "teen" niche – which requires a model to be over 18 but look younger – started asking if I'd be willing to partner with him on a website dedicated exclusively to Mindy. We made a proposal to her: she'd receive 25% of site revenue, I'd receive 25%, and my new

business partner would keep the remaining 50%. His portion was larger because he would be responsible for all website development, hosting and promotions.

Mindy was the easiest porn model I've ever worked with. She had a natural charisma, beautiful smile and a melodic laugh. She loved life, and enlivened any room into which she walked. At the beginning of her "career," she could have been the poster child for "bubbly personality."

Prior to the launch of her website, Mindy's fan base had already exploded. We shared the feedback we received with her, using it to inflate her ego and prod her along. She clearly believed that she was going to become a celebrity.

When an 18-year-old girl begins making \$10,000 per month, she most likely isn't going to know how to handle that amount of money. Mindy was no exception. She wanted to take care of people by giving them money and buying things for them, and she wanted to have fun. Not being promiscuous by nature, she wouldn't go home with fans, but she could be found passed out at parties. She was raped several times over the years.

(Related Video: [Jessica's Story – My Life As A Porn Star](#))

In time, the lifestyle I had saddled her with drained all light and sparkle from her eyes. Where once a girl existed who would light up a room just by being herself, now there was a girl who would often, literally, begin a sentence laughing and end that same sentence in tears.

No Happy Ending

The first time Mindy told me she'd turned her life around and that she wouldn't be doing porn any more, I was actually happy to hear it. I'd seen what had happened in Mindy's life, and I felt bad, because I knew a big part of the blame was on me. Her decision meant I was going to lose one of my best-selling models, but at least I wouldn't have to keep looking into those haunted eyes when she was around.

However, I was a hate-filled, selfish man. My hatred was fueled by the hypocrisy I'd witnessed from people in society who would lecture me about the morality of my career, yet want to see what new pornographic content I'd produced. So while I was happy to see the lights return to Mindy's eyes, I was not happy to be on the receiving end of her attempts to get me out of the industry as well. She definitely wasn't prepared to discuss such matters with me. Had she not decided to try to preach to me, I might not have made such an effort to drag her back into porn. But since the church ladies who she was now meeting with on a regular basis had encouraged her to "plant seeds" into my mind, in retaliation I decided I'd try to remove Mindy's new found faith entirely.

Already, she was having a hard time making ends meet. So I asked her if she understood that old religious men were the ones who had made up the moral rules prohibiting her from participating in her website. I began pointing out inconsistencies in her new beliefs. After having spent so much time with her – at one time she even lived with me – I knew how best to manipulate her into seeing things my way. She'd come back to the lifestyle every time. As time went on, things only got worse. I made her do things that she had refused to do at first. Sometimes Mindy would protest, but she knew she wouldn't earn any money if she didn't do it. She started identifying as a prostitute and started taking drugs. I guess they made it easy to do what she was doing. She bounced from house to house, living with random older men who'd use her for a time and then send her on her way. One result of this is that she has no idea who her son's father might be.

I wish there was a happy ending to Mindy's story, but there's not. Not many months ago, she called in tears, begging me to adopt her two kids. The State had taken them one too many times so she

was no longer eligible to have them returned to her. Her social worker had informed her that a close friend or family member could be given priority and she wondered if I would be willing, as the rest of her family was not. I gave it thought and consideration, but realized I'm not equipped to take them on.

Porn Harms. Period.

I've now known Mindy for almost 13 years. I could write more than one book about her life alone. What is important for you to know is this: when I led her into pornography, her life was forever changed. Random strangers still recognize her and make assumptions about her. She fights hard with mental illness. There is nothing at all attractive about what has happened to her.

I wonder if the men and women who found the images and video content we produced of Mindy so appealing would find it attractive if they knew what it cost her. I wonder if they would be aroused if they knew the reality. But while I was the one who put her in front of a camera, the Law of Supply and Demand also means all of us who have consumed pornography are a part of this cycle of broken lives. Mindy's story is not unique; it happens in some form or another every day, repeatedly. Mindy is someone's daughter. What if she was yours?

At the same time, while there is an enormous amount of darkness in Mindy's life, there are also things I find encouraging. Even though she became pregnant through rape, and even though she knew she might not be able to provide for a child, the thought of abortion never entered her mind. Her children might not have been afforded the best life possible with her, but they do have life, and I have no doubt that they prefer that to the alternative. I also take courage in the fact that Mindy never gives up. There are situations she has faced that are just as bad as or worse than those I've shared, but she doesn't give up. She's never once threatened to end her life, she doesn't whine, and she reluctantly accepts physical assistance.

What I want from you, dear reader, is to remember Mindy's story. It has been almost 13 years since porn began affecting her life, and the images and video we created together will be around until long after she has departed this world. If you think porn is desirable or cool, remember Mindy's story. Most porn stars out there have been manipulated just like Mindy was. Most have been taken advantage of, chewed up and spit out just like Mindy has been. Most porn stars are now as damaged as Mindy is. Take it from a guy who has been in the industry; I should know better than anyone. I recruited more than 500 models into the business over the span of my career and Mindy's certainly not the only one of them whose life fell apart. Not a single one ever came back and said, "Hey, thanks for the porn career!" The vast majority are ashamed and full of regret. And if you *still* think porn doesn't hurt anyone, I'd suggest remembering Mindy's children. The most recent update I have about them is from a few months ago; they were in foster care at that time.

And finally, please help share the message that pornography hurts real people. Let's humanize those who are involved in its creation, so that fewer consumers find it appealing. If you're a consumer, please do whatever is necessary to stop consumption. Let's work to change the way porn is esteemed, transforming the attitude that "everybody uses it" to "it's just not cool" in ways similar to anti-smoking campaigns. We CAN do it.

HOW GUYS LIKE JARED FOGLE GO FROM “REGULAR” PORN TO CHILD PORN

<http://fightthenewdrug.org/jared-fogle-regular-porn-to-child-porn/>

Last week it was announced that Jared Fogle, the former Subway spokesman who gained fame after losing 245 pounds and becoming a weight loss inspiration, will plead guilty to possessing child pornography and traveling to pay for sex with underaged girls. Subway announced that it has parted ways with Fogle due to the allegations.

Jared Fogle's actions are inexcusable and do not represent our brand's values. We had already ended our relationship with Jared.

— SUBWAY® (@SUBWAY) [August 19, 2015](#)

Fogle has pleaded guilty to charges that involve 14 minors and has entered into a plea deal that is expected to give a sentence anywhere from 5-12 years.

“Jared Fogle expects to go to prison,” Fogle’s attorney said. “He will do his time. He expects to do well. He expects to make amends to those people whose lives he has affected.”

The case against the face of the popular sandwich chain started with an anonymous tip and launched a massive investigation that included sorting through more than 16 smartphones, 10 memory cards and 6 laptops. The 14 victims of Fogle’s abuse were identified after police reviewed more than 27,000 emails, 160,000 text messages, and tens of thousands of videos and images.

The charges officially came against Fogle, a married father of two kids, after federal agents seized computers and DVDs from his home last month in Indiana as part of a child pornography investigation involving the former executive director of the Jared Foundation, Fogle’s nonprofit dedicated to preventing childhood obesity. The former head of the charity allegedly sent Fogle child porn images and videos through text messages and a thumb drive throughout 2011-2015.

Federal documents allege Fogle and a minor arranged to meet through text and online messages, and that Fogle asked her to “provide him with access to other underage minors for purposes of commercial sexual activity” and that “the younger the girl, the better.”

An escalating addiction.

One of the scariest realities of porn use is the fact that after a while, “regular” porn just doesn’t do it for the viewer anymore. Research has shown that porn, just like any other drug, is an escalating addiction. And for some people, porn use can eventually evolve into a curiosity or an appetite for violent porn or even child pornography.

Think about it. Is it logical to think that the first time someone like Jared Fogle viewed porn, that he went straight to searching “child porn” or “violent porn” right off the bat? Of course not. Now ask yourself this, isn’t it only logical to reason that criminals caught for child porn started out by watching regular porn and then slowly progressed into the more extreme, illegal material? The answer is, of course, yes.

Don’t take our word for it. We once talked to a man in jail who had charges against him for over 40 counts of child porn. We asked him how we got into it. He told us, “When you’re a porn addict, the same stuff gets boring. You cycle through different phases.”

This sex offender's statement confirms the research done by Zillmann and Bryant. In 1984, the two researchers conducted a study that revealed an increased interest in violent porn just from exposure to non-violent pornography. Zillmann also conducted a study with college freshmen and found that frequent use of pornography requires newer and more bizarre material to achieve the same level of arousal, due to a growing tolerance of sexually explicit material (2000). The study showed that extended porn use creates boredom and dissatisfaction among viewers of both genders (Weaver, 2004).

The fact is that after using any drug for a while, the impulse tends to grow and require more intense stimulation. Just like it is common for gateway drugs like marijuana to lead to harder drugs like cocaine, softcore or "regular" porn can quickly lead into hardcore and even child porn over time.

Child porn has gotten more and more popular.

Child pornography has become more prevalent and larger than we would ever like to imagine. The people who actually get caught for the crime are just the tip of the iceberg. Child pornography is a business that has been expanding virally on the web for years and the material is only getting worse. In 2008, Internet Watch Foundation found 1,536 individual child abuse domains. Every week there are over 20,000 images of child pornography posted on the web (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, 2003). Furthermore, U.S Customs Services estimates that illegal child pornography is offered by approximately 100,000 websites.

Keep in mind, while almost all pedophiles watch porn, not all people who watch porn are pedophiles. But regardless of what causes what, behavioral psychologists discovered over a century ago that when two stimuli are repeatedly paired together, something called classical conditioning takes place. (Pavlov, 1897). Using this widely accepted scientific theory, we know that when a person is constantly pairing sexual feelings with the image of children on a screen, sexual feelings will continue to be associated in the presence of a child in real life.

Watching videos of violent or child pornography desensitizes and blurs the lines for the viewer to what is and is not appropriate concerning sexuality. One study revealed that if a person sees aggressive behavior that is rewarded, the person is more likely to engage in that behavior than those who were not exposed (Bandura, 1961). This shows exactly how a child porn viewer who constantly sees certain behaviors eventually becomes accepting of it.

At what cost does child pornography come?

We had the opportunity to talk to a girl who was forced into child porn at age five by her mother who was a drug addict. The girl was raped and had pictures and videos taken of her. And when this little girl's mother tried to get the family out of the child porn business, she was blackmailed by the abuser who threatened to have child protective services take her children away. The family didn't get out until the little girl and her siblings were "getting too old" and the family had to run away into hiding. Even at the time we talked to her about this over a decade later, she refused to tell us many details about what happened to her in fear of being found.

This girl's therapist concluded that her post-traumatic stress disorder was a result of these events from her childhood. She has an inability to trust others, suffers from severe anxiety around people over 40 (the age of the abusers in her past), is dealing with drug problems to cope with the pain, and working through major distortions about sexuality. She informed us that sex trafficking is not just a far away practice but that it's happening here in regular neighborhoods. She continued:

"I think more should be done in communities and neighborhoods and cities to watch out for child sex trafficking. This all happened to my family in a pretty normal working class suburb in the northwest."

Child pornography—the making of it, the viewing of it, everything about it— to me is worse than [killing] because I would have been happily [killed] if I knew I was going to deal with living my life feeling dead and empty inside already. But that's what the viewers and people involved in child pornography get off on. I don't think it will ever be stopped, but hopefully stifled."

Not only is child pornography or violent pornography damaging to the viewer, it creates a demand and when there is a demand there will always be a supplier ready to make money off of it. Child porn and violent porn viewers do not appear out of thin air, they develop with a history of "regular" pornography use. Porn use is a slippery slope to ideas and behavior that negatively affect the individual and our society as a whole.

(Click article link for references)



THESE CELEBRITY NUDES ARE A BIGGER PROBLEM THAN PEOPLE REALIZE

<http://fightthenewdrug.org/these-celebrity-nudes-are-a-bigger-problem-than-people-realize/>

It's crazy to think that we are the first generation where with just a click of a button you can access an unlimited amount of pornographic videos and images. Pornographic images run rampant on social media and because of this, people posting nude photos on social media has become normalized as well. Many celebrities have been celebrated, reposted, praised, and retweeted for their nude posts. Celebrities like Kim Kardashian, Rihanna, Nicki Minaj, and Miley Cyrus tend to make headlines for their posts, which shows just how normalized pornography has become in our society.

But as we pointed out in our blog post about [Kim Kardashian's #BreakTheInternet photos](#) last year, we have to ask: If the person isn't *actually* doing porn but are posting nude photos of themselves that are then republished all over mainstream online news sources and social media, is it having the same negative effect on society?

Dr. Gary Brooks, a renowned psychologist at Texas A&M who specializes in researching the harmful effects of pornography—softcore pornography in particular—said:

"The problem with softcore pornography is that it's voyeurism—it teaches men to view women as objects rather than to be in relationships with women as human beings."

The sad truth is that nude photos on social media may have not been made by a porn studio, but they are still more than likely leading lots of people to pursue just that. Also, the fact that these images are shared and reposted so many times that we begin to lose sight of what's really wrong with it. It just makes the porn culture in our society even worse. Whenever celebrities, or anyone for that matter, post nude sexualized images on our social media feeds, there are negative and harmful ideas that are subconsciously being placed into society.

[Studies](#) have shown that images are the most powerful teachers because they are a visual tool that are much more easily remembered. So when nude images go viral and are celebrated, all it does is give guys an unrealistic idea of women and give girls an unrealistic view of beauty and self-worth. To give you an idea of how damaging these images are, a [study](#) by Princeton psychologists showed a group of men pictures of male and females, some barely clothed and some not. During the study, the psychologists monitored their medial prefrontal cortex (mPFC), which is involved in recognizing human faces and distinguishing one person from another. For the most part, the mPFC was activated with each picture. However, when the men viewed the pictures of sexually dressed women, it was not activated. Basically, the automatic reaction in the men's brains suggests that they didn't perceive the women as fully human. Just as a body.

In reality, celebrity nudes are contributing to the objectification of the human body and society's basic desensitization to sexual material. That's what celebrities and other people who post nude sexualized images don't realize. And while we understand that these people aren't porn stars and aren't being forced into taking these pics, we think it's sad that they are—knowingly or unknowingly—helping to perpetuate objectification and are becoming a type of gateway for porn.

It's not cool or normal for these pornographic images to be passed off as just another post while the world gawks at them. If these nude pics become accepted on social media, then it's a very

small leap for actual porn to become normal and acceptable as well. By realizing this, we are removing the normalization from these posts and seeing them for what they really are.



NEW STUDY SHOWS THAT WATCHING PORN IS LINKED TO REAL LIFE SEXUAL AGGRESSION

<http://fightthenewdrug.org/new-study-shows-that-watching-porn-is-linked-to-real-life-sexual-aggression/>

A new [meta-analysis published in the *Journal of Communication*](#) is showing concrete evidence that viewing pornography increases the likelihood of physical and verbal sexual aggression.

The researchers sought out to answer one question: Is pornography consumption correlated with committing actual acts of sexual aggression? They performed a meta-analysis (collecting data from numerous studies done by different researchers to show one particular finding) of 22 studies from 7 different countries. Their findings?

“[Porn] consumption was indeed associated with sexual aggression in the United States and internationally, among males and females, and in cross-sectional and longitudinal studies. Associations were stronger for verbal than physical sexual aggression, although both were significant. The general pattern of results suggested that violent content may be an exacerbating factor.”

The sad thing is that this is not a shocking discovery. For those who have studied the correlation between pornography and sexual violence, these findings only make the case more concrete. Science and research have proven that it is difficult for even non-violent porn viewers to be uninfluenced by what they watch. [Study after study](#) has found that even watching “regular,” non-violent correlates with the viewer being more likely to use verbal coercion, drugs, and alcohol to push women into sex. These studies also show that those who consistently watch non-violent porn are more likely to support statements that promote abuse and sexual aggression towards both women and girls because porn portrays an unequal power difference between partners where men are dominant and women are submissive. Finally, an [analysis of 33 different studies](#) found that exposure to non-violent porn measurably increased aggressive behavior, and that viewing violent porn increased even further. These effects include having violent sexual fantasies which can lead to actually committing violent assaults. Not surprisingly, the more violent the porn, the more likely the user is to support and act out in violence.

Of course, not every porn watcher is going to turn into an abuser, but that doesn’t mean pornography consumption isn’t still associated with a wave of violence on a massive scale. The vast majority of the porn viewed by millions of people every day is teaching that humiliation and violence are a normal part of what sex is supposed to be—and that education is changing what happens in bedrooms around the world. It’s making it harder for many men to feel aroused unless they can do the things they’ve seen in porn, and it’s leaving women feeling like they have to play along. The more porn teaches us that aggression is a part of sex, the more that violence is being made invisible.

EXPOSING THE DISTURBING LINK BETWEEN PORN AND SEX CRIMES

<http://fightthenewdrug.org/exposing-the-disturbing-link-between-porn-and-sex-crimes/>

In writing this article, it is not our intention to prove scientifically, or otherwise, that behind every violent sex crime there is a pornography problem. Clearly, violent sexual crimes existed long before dirty magazines and porn sites came into the picture. The purpose of this article is to address the concerning misinformation that many pro-porn defenders promote by saying that pornography is harmless or by saying that we lack the necessary “conclusive scientific data” that pornography causes sex crimes. (We have heard countless people even argue that pornography is helpful because it allows people to view their deviant sexual fantasies, rather than practicing them on another person.) These pro-porn people contend that pornography actually *decreases* instances of rape because it is an acceptable sexual outlet. However, there is already enough evidence of a causal link between porn and sex crimes to make the claim that pornography is extremely harmful.

Everyone’s brain is wired to repeat what it sees and hears; it’s a major part of how we learn. And the more senses you get involved in the learning process, the more consistent the message, and the more often you see it, the more likely you are to be influenced by it (30). That’s just one more reason why viewing pornography is dangerous. It’s only a short jump from watching something in porn to actually imitating it in real life. And sometimes the things you see can really hurt yourself and other people.

Did you know that there’s been a correlation found between people who view pornography and people who commit sexual crimes? Now we’re not saying that watching porn will make you become a serial rapist, but the way pornography affects you, it can definitely influence your judgment, which is porn is connected with sexual violence. Proving this point is kind of tough, because an accurate study, as one researcher put it, “would require a sampling of much more than a thousand males, exposed to pornography through puberty and adolescence, while the other group is totally isolated from its influence in all its forms and varying degrees. Each group would then have to be monitored—through the commission of violent crimes or not” (1).

(Related: [Taylor’s Story – How Porn Taught My Ex-Boyfriend To Rape](#))

Obviously, a study that invasive and complex would be next to impossible to set up. But that doesn’t mean the facts aren’t already there. “In spite of the lack of formal research, though, the FBI’s own statistics show that pornography is found at 80 percent of the scenes of violent sex crimes, or in the homes of the perpetrators” (1). Now we think that’s kind of tough to ignore. The people who promote pornography think that is actually easy to overlook. They say that porn is harmless, or that science doesn’t support the claims. Sounds about right coming from someone who stands to make a profit in the porn industry. The fact is that there is more than enough evidence, like findings from the FBI, that prove there is a link between pornography and sex crimes.

In fact, here’s a bunch of evidence about that link:

*** The University of New Hampshire did a study that showed that the states with the highest readership of pornographic magazines like Playboy and Penthouse, also have the highest rape rates (2).**

***The Michigan State Police Department found that pornography is used or imitated in 41 percent of the sex crimes they have investigated (3).**

***Dr. Victor Cline did research that showed how men who become addicted to pornographic materials begin to want more explicit or deviant material and end up acting out what they have seen (5).**

*** Now this one will make your skin crawl—Dr. James Dobson interviewed Ted Bundy, one of the nation’s most notorious serial killers, on the day before his execution. Bundy said that the “most damaging kinds of pornography are those that involve sexual violence . . . The wedding of those two forces, as I know only too well, brings about behavior that is just, just too terrible to describe” (1).**

Watch the video: [Ted Bundy \(Serial Killer\) Admits the Harms of Pornography](#)

***Two doctors noted in their research-based book, *Pornography and Sexual Aggression*, that “Certain [aggressive] forms of pornography can affect aggressive attitudes toward women and can desensitize an individual’s perception of rape. These attitudes and perceptions are, furthermore, directly related to actual aggressive behavior against women.” They also found that adult pornography was connected with each of the 1,400 child sexual molestation cases in Louisville, Kentucky, and child pornography was connected with the majority of them (21).**

***Another review of controlled studies found that extensive viewing of the type of pornographic material commonly sold at adult bookstores was positively correlated with an increased self-reported willingness to commit rape or other forced sexual acts (28).**

***The Kingston Sexual Offenders Clinic in Canada found “an unexpected finding” when they conducted a study of their patients over a period of six years. “One of the rapists reported that he used consenting sex depictions to incite rape images in the process of preparing himself to attack a woman. Subsequent questioning revealed a further five rapists who made similar claims, and 10 of the 10 rapists who currently used (pornography) for enjoyment (not necessarily preparatory to offending) also said they used it to incite rape fantasies (22).**

***Dr. Dolf Zillman and Dr. Jennings Bryant showed that continued exposure to pornography had serious negative effects on beliefs about sexuality in general, and on attitudes toward women in particular. They also found that pornography desensitizes people to rape as a criminal offense, and that massive exposure to pornography encourages a desire for increasingly deviant materials that depict violence (such as sadomasochism and rape) (29).**

*** Individuals with a predisposition for aggression (i.e., men who are at relatively high risk for aggression) have shown to be particularly drawn to images of pornography and are more likely to expose themselves to such images in the future than lower risk individuals. Moreover, a number of priming studies have shown that men with earlier risk characteristics may interpret sexually explicit material differently than lower risk individuals, such that pornography activates and reinforces inappropriate cognitive representations (e.g., hostility toward women) and fosters the development of sexual preoccupation in these men (14).**

You can see that there's tons of info that backs up the connection between viewing porn and committing sex crimes. But, just so you get both sides of the issue, the porn pushers think they have evidence to support their point too. Here is the other side of the argument that makes the pro-porn supporters feel like they have a leg to stand on:

***Berl Kutchinsky of Denmark studied the countries of Denmark, Sweden, West Germany, and the U.S.A. Kutchinsky showed that for the years 1964 to 1984, as the pornography became increasingly available, the rate of rapes in these countries either decreased, or remained relatively stable. These countries all legalized or decriminalized pornography in 1969, 1970, and 1973 respectfully. The rates of nonsexual violent crimes and nonviolent sex crimes (e.g., peeping and flashing) essentially decreased also. Only in the U.S. did it appear that in the 1970s and 1980s, as porn became increasingly available, that rape appeared to increase (5)(15)(16)(17)(18)(5). The theory Kutchinsky came up with based on his studies is that the easy availability of pornography had caused sex crimes to decrease by acting as a "safety valve" for potential offenders.**

***Studies of Croatia and Shanghai, China also showed significant decreases in rape as pornography became increasingly available. To add to this data, it should be mentioned that yet unpublished studies from Poland, Finland, and the Czech Republic also similarly found that as the availability of pornography increased, the incidence of sex crimes decreased (7)(8)(9)(10)(19).**

So what's the deal? Why is there support for both sides? Well, the porn pushers love to talk about these studies because they seem to validate their points. What they don't like to talk about is how the people who have since reviewed these studies have found some serious flaws in the conclusions. It turns out that there are a couple of things that distorted the results. First of all, at the same time that pornography was legalized in all of those countries, a lot of other sex crimes including peeping, "indecent towards women," and certain types of incest, were also made legal. So with those things no longer considered a crime, of course the crime rates dropped. Second, Kutchinsky put rape in the same category as less serious sex crimes. That made it easier to hide the fact that serious crimes like rape actually increased after pornography was legalized in Denmark (5).

The facts are clear: [pornography is harmful and research is proving it](#). No matter what people say to try and make pornography seem normal or harmless, there's enough evidence out there that says it's not. With porn being so available, affordable, and accessible, you've got to know what you're up against. Learn the facts about the negative effects of porn—all of them, there's way more than just the link between porn and sexual crime—and you'll think twice before looking at it.

(Click article link for citations)

40% GOAN YOUTH WATCH RAPE PORN, FINDS SURVEY

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/goa/40-Goan-youth-watch-rape-porn-finds-survey/articleshow/38986007.cms?from=mdr>

PANAJI: Some 40% of the youngsters in Goa watch 'rape porn' regularly, Mysore-based organization Rescue said, based on a sample survey it conducted covering 200 undergraduate male students in Goa across 10 colleges.

Rescue CEO Abishek Clifford said they have asked state administrators to install software that blocks pornographic sites before distributing the laptops and tablets that the Goa government provides to students.

Clifford said that according to their survey 76% of the surveyed students said that watching pornography involving rape led to the desire to rape in them. He said that another 47% of these students ended up watching child porn.

"All of the students were already watching porn, 50% of them were now watching violent porn. Watching pornography is a progressive addiction. When it no longer satisfies you, you turn to violent porn or child porn," he said.

He recommended a software K9 that he said allows porn sites to be blocked completely.

"One high school in Goa reported to have caught their female students with a pen drive that contained violent porn, which the school head was shocked to see in the possession of children," Clifford said. Rescue's survey claims that students end up watching 28 videos of rape each week.

Drawing a link between watching rape porn and rape reported in real life, Clifford said, "The incidents of rape are increasing due to saturation of violent internet porn. Everyone is shocked at the level of violence in rape, now we know why. Violent porn advertises rape and half of the porn sites have it."

The students surveyed were between the ages of 18 to 22, he said.

TAYLOR'S STORY: HOW PORN TAUGHT MY EX-BOYFRIEND TO RAPE

<http://fightthenewdrug.org/taylors-story-how-porn-taught-my-ex-boyfriend-to-rape/>

The following story is a guest piece written by Taylor Rippey Monson, co-founder of [Honey](#), an organization dedicated to stopping the silence on the subject of sexual assault. Honey is a bold, empowering organization that seeks to change the public attitude about sexual assault through the real, raw testimonials found on their site known as [Truths](#). Check out thetasteofhoney.org to see what Honey is doing to #StopTheSilence.

We were doing homework together when I borrowed his laptop to Google something. My thumb tapped the search bar, and his previous searches spilled down the page.

“Teen blonde porn”

“Skinny teen blonde porn”

“Skinny teen blonde small boobs porn”

My heart became stuck in my throat and my stomach rose to my ribcage. I instantly felt nauseous, swept over with a sickness and deep disturbance. It was the type of feeling that could only come from realizing that someone you had convinced yourself you trusted was searching internet porn for your body double. I realized instantly who those search terms were describing. Yes, the result of those searches were supposed to replace me.

“What is this?” I asked him. He told me that he was horny, and that my refusal to “do anything” with him had driven him to watch porn of young women that resembled me. He told me that every guy watches porn and that it was nothing to stress about or “freak out” over. His response was so nonchalant and matter-of-fact, even lighthearted, as if it was a simple and understood truth. In his mind, men watching porn was like two plus two equaling four. But this equation was much more demented. My body was trembling with a queasiness that made my head and heart feel heavy, my mouth taste sour.

But it wasn't just me that I felt sick for—I felt sick for the girls who appeared on his screen after a few clicks. I even felt sick for him, a young man who had become so numb that human beings—myself and those young women on the screen—had become nothing more to him than a collection of body parts to be consumed for his personal pleasure.

But the influence of his X-rated web history didn't end at the computer screen. In fact, it was hard to feel sicker than I already had been.

Because a few weeks prior, this same person had raped me.

In a twisted attempt to normalize his abuse, manipulation and coercion, I told myself that what had happened was just a misunderstanding; that I was making a big deal out of something that wasn't. I tried to make myself believe that I was making a big deal out of his disregard for my repeated pleas to “not go that far” and to stop. I told myself I was blowing out of proportion his lack of respect for our exhaustive conversations about me wanting to wait until I was married to have sex. After days of rationalization (and even a desperate conversation with a peer who told

me that “it happens all the time”), I decided to try and ignore the fact that I had been assaulted. All I told him was that I didn’t want it to happen again.

I told myself that I was overreacting—after all, he had acted like it was nothing anyways.

And perhaps the scariest part of it all was that it truly was meaningless to him. His consumption of porn, along with several other behaviors I later discovered, had desensitized him to the point of rationalizing that sexually assaulting another human being—violating them in one of the worst ways—wasn’t a big deal. Porn had slowly but completely robbed him of his sense of dignity and humanity.

Boundaries didn’t exist for him, especially when it came to physical contact. My requests for him not to touch or grab me the way that he did were met with laughter or excuses that it was his way of showing affection. He would even say that he found me so attractive that he “couldn’t help himself.” Sometimes he would make fun of me for being so sensitive or for acting like a “prude.” He spoke poorly of girls he had been in relationships with previously, painting them as “psycho” and telling me how much he hated them. I remember thinking that I was probably going to be another one of those girls at some point. One night when we were together, he saw one of their cars parked next to a popular restaurant. I saw him grow angry, roll down his window and dump his cup of Coke all over the girl’s car. It frightened me to think of what he would do—could do—if I ever tried to stand up for myself.

I wanted to be able to turn the horror of that relationship into a fairytale ending, as if everything sickening that had taken place before was just a result of miscommunication. Even after the relationship ended, it still took me years to realize that the absolute disgust, sorrow, inhumanity and brokenness I felt were never emotions that I should have had to suffer through. Porn had taught him that disrespect, domination, degradation, abuse and selfishness were acceptable, even desirable.

As if he didn’t know what rape was. As if he didn’t know what wide-eyed silence and tears meant. As if he didn’t know what “no” meant.

Porn doesn’t only kill love—it kills humanity.

- Taylor

Science and research have proven that it is difficult for even non-violent porn viewers to be uninfluenced by what they watch. [Study after study](#) has found that even watching “regular”, non-violent porn is correlated with the viewer being more likely to use verbal coercion, drugs, and alcohol to push women into sex. These studies also show that those who consistently watch non-violent porn are more likely to support statements that promote abuse and sexual aggression towards both women and girls because porn portrays an unequal power difference between partners where men are dominant and women are submissive. Finally, an [analysis of 33 different studies](#) found that exposure to non-violent porn equally increased aggressive behavior the same as viewing violent porn. These effects include having violent sexual fantasies which can lead to actually committing violent assaults. Not surprisingly, the more violent the porn, the more likely the user is to support and act out in violence.

4 WAYS THAT WATCHING PORN COSTS YOU MORE THAN YOU REALIZE

<http://fightthenewdrug.org/4-ways-that-watching-porn-costs-you-more-than-you-realize/>

American author and journalist, Naomi Wolf, wrote a very [sobering article](#) in NY Magazine about porn costing our *entire generation* their sexual confidence:

“For most of human history, erotic images have been reflections of, or celebrations of, or substitutes for, real naked women. For the first time in human history, the images’ power and allure have supplanted that of real naked women. Today, real naked women are just bad porn.” She goes on to say, ***“I am 40, and mine is the last female generation to experience that sense of sexual confidence and security in what we had to offer.”***

It’s scary to think that the [harmful effects of porn](#) have actually taken away our ability to feel comfortable in our own skin. Consistent with this are countless different forms of the prices we pay when viewing porn.

Porn costs kids’ childhood

Remember when kids used to play outside? These days, most kids either own or have access to some form of iPad, computer or cell phone. This is a great opportunity for porn industries that target kids while they’re young to gain lifelong customers. Studies show a 1-in-14 chance of a [child typing in a misspelled URL](#) and stumbling upon a porn site by accident. Unfortunately, that’s all it takes to start. Now, children as young as 9 years old are getting addicted to pornography and its changing the way kids are growing up. (Read: [Growing Up Fast – Why 12 Year Old Girls Are Having Sex Rougher, Earlier](#)) We get far too many messages from people saying their life changed when they were just 9-10 years old, innocently playing on the family computer.

Porn costs relationships

When someone quite literally [bonds themselves to porn](#), they take that bond away from their partner. It’s the same bond often robbed by physically cheating. Porn is mentally and emotionally cheating. There are [countless stories of relationships](#), from high school to marriage, ending with porn use being a main reason.

Porn costs sex lives

In an ironic twist, watching more sex is essentially leading to less sex and unsatisfying sex. Watching someone else’s cheap fantasy is actually keeping you from living your own. While porn promises the fulfillment of sexual desire, it never delivers and only leads to endless searching for more. Read how porn can [twist and distort a person’s natural sexuality](#).

Porn costs happiness

Porn is a temporary false [substitute of happiness](#) that leaves users feeling empty. Watching porn provides momentary satisfaction that never truly fulfills. It would be like filling your gas tank without fixing the very obvious hole in it. You’re not going to get very far before you break down again... and again. That constant void is depression, as a result of compulsive use. Anyone who has ever suffered from addiction will be the first to tell you that [happiness always seems one fix away](#), but it never comes and only puts you in a worse place than before.

These are just a few examples of the bills porn leaves us with after claiming to be “complimentary.” While seemingly free in the short term, porn can actually wind up costing you the most valuable things in life in the long term.

WHAT I WISH MY FRIENDS KNEW BEFORE THEY STARTED WATCHING PORN

IT COULD MAKE YOU
PREFER THE FANTASY
TO REALITY.

IT COULD NORMALIZE
BEHAVIORS THAT YOU
PREVIOUSLY THOUGHT
WERE WRONG.

IT COULD CAUSE
DISSATISFACTION IN
YOUR RELATIONSHIPS.

IT COULD PRODUCE
SHAME AND GUILT,
PREVENTING YOU FROM
PURSUING HEALTHY
RELATIONSHIPS.

IT COULD TOTALLY
MESS UP YOUR
SEX LIFE.

IT COULD LEAD TO
AN ACTUAL ADDICTION.

IT COULD CAUSE
YOU TO EXPERIENCE
ERECTILE DYSFUNCTION
AT AGE 24.

IT COULD CAUSE YOU
TO OBJECTIFY OTHERS
AND SEE THEM AS
A COLLECTION OF BODY
PARTS RATHER THAN
A HUMAN BEING.

WWW.FIGHTTHENEWDRUG.ORG

REFERENCES: Dubinsky, Lauren, "What I Wish I'd Known Before Watching Porn," The Huffington Post, TheHuffingtonPost.com, 23 July 2012. Web. 12 Mar. 2013. "Can Porn Cause Erectile Dysfunction? Pt 1," The Dr. Oz Show, N.p., n.d. Web. 12 Mar. 2013.

To the boys,

The first time you see a woman naked will not be like you imagined. There will be no love, no trust, no intimacy. In fact, you won't even be in the same room as her.

You won't get to hold her. You won't get to calm her nerves with nerves of your own. You won't get to kiss her or tell her she's beautiful.


The first time you see a woman naked you will be sitting in front of a computer screen. You will be watching a random stranger pretend at intimacy and perform sex. You will watch this woman, who does not represent real women, transfigure into a fantasy that is pixelated, filtered, and customized. She will come ready-made, like an order at a restaurant.

The man on the screen will be rougher than you. He will teach you how to talk to her. He will teach you what you should demand. He will teach you that your job is to take what is yours.

You must unlearn this. You must unlearn this twisted sense of love. You must unlearn this twisted definition of pleasure and intimacy you are being taught. Kill this false idea of love, this selfish sense of entitlement, this harmful way of consuming another person.

#PornKillsLove



 FIGHT THE NEW DRUG

To the girls,

The first time you experience sex will be nothing like you imagined. You will be searching for affection but will find no connection. There will be no love involved. You will not feel valued or cared for.

You won't get to lay your head on his chest. You won't get your hair gently tucked behind your ears. You won't get to look into his eyes or smile at his smile. You won't be held or made to feel special. There will be nothing unique or beautiful about what you see.

The first time you experience sex will be from behind the sickly glow of a computer screen. The man you watch will be a random stranger putting on a performance with another stranger. You will try to project your desire for romance upon what you are seeing but it will come back hollow, like an echo in an empty home. The man you watch will not hold her like you dream of being held. He will operate much like a machine, treating her like an object used to complete some selfish transaction.

The woman you see on the screen will appear to be flawless in nearly every way-exaggerated in all the desirable places and minimized in all the undesired ones. She will have been primped, prodded, and pasted, like a paper doll constructed for pleasure. She will do and say things that you'll be told are every boy's fantasy. She will act, perform, persuade, and pretend her exaggerated enjoyment. She will look like everything that the men on-screen want, but nothing like any women that you know.

You must unlearn this. You must unlearn this tainted view of love. You must rid yourself of this warped version of intimacy. Kill these false ideals. Allow yourself to experience real, meaningful love.

#PornKillsLove

 FIGHT THE NEW DRUG



FIGHTER PLEDGE

I AM PART OF THE GLOBAL ARMY OF FIGHTERS

<http://fightthenewdrug.org/fighter-pledge-download/>

Now is the time for me to stand and help others overcome that which has affected my family, my friends and my community. I will avoid exposure to this powerful drug called pornography. I will be a source of strength to those who need support and accept help when I am in need. I will be the voice of reason among the clatter of self-serving opinion.

Too many have suffered. Too many have sacrificed. I must be open about a topic no one wants to discuss.

AS A FIGHTER I AM...

I AM STRONG

I have joined an army of supporters and will rely on their strength as well as my own to adopt a new shouldering of obligation in helping others understand how pornography is affecting their lives.

I AM OPEN MINDED

I recognize that mine is not the only opinion. I will respect others points of view just as I expect them to do the same towards me.

I AM ACCEPTING

I know that judging others actions is not my place. I will respectfully promote my opinions but in the end allow others to choose for themselves.

I AM A TRUE LOVER

I seek real relationships and shun their hollow counterfeits. I will not be that lone ranger looking for love from behind a computer screen.

I AM BOLD

I am not afraid to speak openly about the effects of pornography.

I AM A REBEL

I refuse to follow the status quo. I will do what needs to be done and say what needs to be said regardless of what is popular.

I AM REAL

I do not pursue false imitations or masked presentations. I am confident enough in myself to be genuine.

I AM UNDERSTANDING

I am aware of the difficulty some may face in ridding their lives of pornography. Rather than condemning actions I will help relieve shame.

I AM ENCOURAGING

I will not turn my back on those that need my help. I will commit to helping them overcome the effects of pornography.

Fighting Porn Viewing Habits & Addiction... & **Conquering them!**

For help, visit: [Fortify](#), [NoFap](#)

WHY SO MANY YOUNG MEN ARE GIVING UP WATCHING PORN

<http://fightthenewdrug.org/why-so-many-young-men-are-giving-up-watching-porn/>

This post was taken from an [article originally posted in Esquire](#).

For men who grew up in the pre-digital age, porn was a floppy disc circulated at school with pictures of “glamor models”, downloaded via the painfully slow 56k dial modems that had just begun to come out. This generation was on the very cusp of the internet age, when access was still restricted to a shared family computer and massive porn site hubs were still just a twinkle in some Californian entrepreneurs’ eyes.

But here’s the thing about the generation of 10-13 year old boys who came just after – those born after, say, 1992 – and all 10-13 year old boys since: any one of them can see more naked women on their phone in 10 minutes than most grown men in history saw in their entire lifetimes. They can also, of course, see women performing acts most men in history would never have dreamt up, let alone witnessed. And unsurprisingly, in overwhelming numbers, this is precisely what they choose to do. The government, slowly waking up to the issue, issued a cross-party report in 2012 that revealed one in three boys of this age had viewed explicit material online, with four out of five becoming regular users by the time they were 16.

One reaction to this is a sort of generational jealousy, like looking at PlayStations and iPads and ruefully remembering you had to make do with playing Oregon Trail on Windows 98. But increasing numbers of men who have reached their early twenties having grown up on this diet of unlimited porn are reporting some draw backs, including a decreased interest in “real” sex, an inability to ejaculate during it and – worst of all for most – [porn induced erectile dysfunction](#). At the same time, the young women they’re sleeping with are reporting their own problems, chiefly unrealistic expectations for things like anal sex, facials and general “porn star” behaviour: pressure to look and perform in ways they’re often not comfortable with.

None of these fears about pornography are new. The difference is that they’re not being voiced by feminists or churches. They’re coming from young men themselves.

On 16 May 2012, a video of a Ted Talk called “The Great Porn Experiment” was placed on YouTube, and has been watched 4.7 million times since. In it, retired physiology teacher Gary Wilson claims: “The widespread use of internet porn is one of the fastest moving global experiments every conducted.”

Watch the video: [The Great Porn Experiment by Gary Wilson](#)

His argument is that we don’t know what happens to young men when they can watch an unlimited amount of pornography – both in terms of volume and variety – before they’ve had any kind of real-life sexual experience, because it has no precedent in history. Only now are the “guinea pigs” of the internet era reaching the age where they can tell us.

One of the biggest places they’re gathering to do so is on an online community hosted on the popular social media website Reddit, called “NoFap”. [NoFap is an online support group and resource](#) for anyone jaded by their porn use. It sets a challenge of giving up internet porn and masturbating altogether for 90 days (for the internet generation, one barely exists without the other, and any attempt to masturbate will almost inevitably lead to watching porn).

During this period of abstinence, users say, men can expect to first “flat line” – where their interest in sex vanishes almost altogether – then begin to experience “superpowers”, which include everything from a greater interest in the opposite sex and improved self-confidence to more energy and alertness in everyday life. By internet standards, NoFap is an incredibly positive and earnest place to hang out. The users, of which there are now more than 100,000, post updates on their progress, share their difficulties and ask for help when they fear a “relapse” is imminent.

But buried beneath all the cheerleading and posturing are some genuinely upsetting and often quite touching stories from young men who believe porn is bad for them, usually in two ways: the amount of time it takes up – often several hours at a time, usually late at night – and the nature of the material they are viewing.

One NoFap user, Will, is a 25-year-old from the UK. He explains how, growing up, he found himself attracted to “big women”, a predilection that escalated thanks to his internet use.

“I found myself gravitating towards the darker side of that particular fetish – things like force-feeding and men being ‘squashed’,” he explains. “There are videos online of porn actresses who are so overweight they can barely walk. The thought of these women being so large turned me on.” He adds: “Afterwards, I felt incredibly guilty. Being so big you can’t walk more than a few yards? There’s no enjoyment in that life.”

Will’s story is typical of those found on NoFap, where young men talk about [“escalating” over the years](#) from looking up naked pictures or vanilla videos to extreme or niche tastes.

Another YouTube video that has become required viewing in NoFap circles is of a Ted talk by an Israeli gender studies student called Ran Gavrieli, who sets out to explain why he decided to quit.

Watch the video: [Why I Stopped Watching Internet Porn by Ran Gavrieli](#)

“I stopped watching porn because it brought anger and violence into my sexual fantasies that were not there originally,” he begins. “What porn is showing us 80–90 per cent of the time is sex with no hands involved. No touching, no caressing, no kissing. Porn cameras have no interest in sensual activities. They are only into penetration. This is not how we authentically desire.”

“Before porn, I used to fantasize about a scenario in which I would meet a woman, what I would say to her and what she would say to me. But porn conquered my mind. I lost my ability to imagine. [...] I found myself closing my eyes trying to masturbate, trying desperately to think about something human and not making it, because my mind was bombarded with all those images of women being violated.”

The reaction in the comments below the video is a typical mix of gratitude and support and dismissive anger, though with just under 8 million views and strong endorsements throughout the anti-porn world, it’s an experience that is clearly hitting a nerve. The question now confronting the scientific community is why exactly this modern phenomenon is occurring. Could evolutionary biology be to blame?

Dr Thaddeus Birchard is an expert in psychosexual therapy and the founder of the UK’s first sex addiction treatment program at the Marylebone Centre. From his office in central London, lined with hundreds of books on human sexuality, he treats men with all forms of sexual addiction, including internet pornography.

[“The human brain craves novelty,”](#) he explains, with the soft-spoken but assertive tone people in his current profession require. “That’s why couples have sex when they go away for the weekend, when they’ve not had sex for months. And you get endless novelty on the internet.”

Birchard likens it to playing a slot machine (the mental state of a sex addict is highly comparable to that of a gambling addict). “You go on internet porn and you don’t know when you are going to get the hit. You could look at a dozen pictures or videos, and suddenly there is a hit. Or look at a hundred, and there isn’t.”

This quest for new experience explains why heavy porn users eventually explore fresh versions of what has aroused them in the past – and online, “fresh” usually means “more extreme”. What makes it even more powerful is that during sex, solo or otherwise, we’re programmed not to think about whether we’ll regret what we’re doing later.

To help me understand what happens to the human brain while watching porn, he draws a rough outline of a head on a large sheet of paper. He sketches the limbic system – the bit that processes our impulses; and the frontal cortex – the bit we need to override those impulses with rational thought. Porn appeals to the former, and his job is to help people get better at using the latter.

“Arousal shuts down our capacity to think about consequences,” Birchard says. “It’s designed to do that. Mother Nature intends for you to maximize your DNA, and you do that by frequent ejaculation in as many places as possible. It’s a literal shutting down, so you stop thinking about your wife, or going to work in the morning at seven, and stay on the internet until four in the morning.”

Still, the amount of time internet porn takes up or how much men regret the nature of what they look at isn’t the real problem for most of the young men on NoFap. The real problem is how it affects their behavior with women.

Alexander Rhodes launched NoFap as a bit of joke a few years ago, but now takes the task of helping men quit pornography very seriously. A 24-year-old web developer from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, he compares pornography to his generation’s version of cigarettes — something harmful and addictive that we’re learning the consequences of only in hindsight.

Despite all the [depressing accounts of relationships ruined and sex drives killed](#), the dominant message that emerges from NoFap and similar male-led anti-porn websites is actually positive. More than anything, they want to talk about how quitting porn has turned their lives around.

These are the excitable declarations that make up most of the forum posts – men reaching new milestones in abstinence and wanting to brag about it, in the nicest possible way. They range from claims of a reinvigorated mojo and greater vigor to greater energy and alertness.

Key to this message is the belief, shared by NoFap and [yourbrainonporn.com](#), the website run by Gary Wilson, that by quitting men can “reset” their brains and return their sexuality to “normal” levels, diminishing the appetites artificially encouraged by heavy porn use. The site also reasons that today’s porn is “about as comparable to the porn older men grew up with as today’s computer games are to playing checkers.”

According to psychology, the male sexual template is set between the ages of seven and nine, before being activated in adolescence. It is during these tender years that a lifetime of sexual tastes and expectations are created.

TOP 4 PORN ADDICTION MYTHS: Q&A

<http://blog.fortifyprogram.org/blog/2015/12/10/top-4-porn-addiction-myths-qa>

Q: Do only people with “Addictive Personalities” have a problem with porn?

A: So there is still a lot of debate on this one. [A recent study by Simone Kühn, and Jürgen Gallinat](#), found that frequent porn users had a significant reduction in grey matter in areas of the brain like the frontal lobe. They also found a decrease in neural connectivity in those areas. The important thing to know about this is these are the areas of the brain that control logic, reasoning and decision making. All things that contribute to compulsive behavior. The catch is that this was not a “before and after” study. Meaning the scientists didn’t take a look at people’s brains before they had watched porn regularly for a few years, only after. Because of this they couldn’t unequivocally conclude that the porn addiction caused the underdeveloped brain makeup. It is still possible that people are predisposed to porn use because of the structure of their brains at early stages of their lives.

There are a couple reasons this is unlikely.

1. [After porn use stops](#), the neural pathways in the brain that were being inhibited begin to grow and develop. This shows that even if porn wasn’t the initial cause of underdevelopment, it was creating an environment that stunted neurological growth.
2. [Porn acts almost exactly like a drug](#), as far as chemical release in the brain. This is important when answering this question because we do have “before and after” science for drugs. These studies show that susceptibility to drug use has more to do with your environment than your personality.

This chicken-or-the-egg question can be a little frustrating but honestly, why is it so important? If you have noticed that porn is causing negativity in your life the question should be “what are you going to do about it?” Besides, having an “addictive personality” just sounds like people are going to be addicted to hanging out with you.

Q: Is porn addiction just about sex?

Watch the video: [Everything We Think We Know About Addiction Is Wrong](#)

A: Not nearly as much as you would think. The above video talks about a lot of misconceptions towards addiction and concludes that addiction is about a lack of healthy connections. Sex is a powerful way to connect with another person. When it is healthy and reciprocated, that level of intimacy can help us feel important, powerful, wanted, and useful. Who doesn’t want to feel those things? Author John Steinbeck said that “Most of the vices of men are attempted short cuts to love.” When someone is caught in an addiction it becomes the only way their brains know how to seek out connection. Even though it is a short cut, and there is no real reciprocation, we still try and fake it. Remember, most of the things that drive people to porn addiction started as good, healthy, human desires that have been twisted into something dark.

Q: Is there such thing as healthy porn use?

A: We’re going to go with a solid no with this one. First off, the whole “I watch porn all the time and I’m fine” argument has some pretty big holes in it. Our first question to that would be if you have ever tried going without porn for a while. A month? What about 90 days? Not admitting you have a problem because you never tested it is not the same thing as not having a problem. The

second reason is that porn will always affect how you see others. This has huge play in current or future romantic relationships. [Studies have shown](#) that after viewing porn, people experience less attraction to their partner and less sexual satisfaction. Even in situations of infrequent porn use. Basically, porn contributes to intimacy FOMO (Fear of missing out). If we're always on the lookout for bigger, better, shinier, we'll never be able to enjoy with what we have. Last reason; there is no such thing as "Free-Trade" porn. While a lot of industries are pushing to make sure their products come from reliable, socially conscious sources that do not contribute to poverty, slavery or violence, the porn industry is on it's way back into the dark ages. Open source porn sites are becoming more and more popular and what that means is regulation is almost non-existent. Anyone, from anywhere, can upload anything. If a subject's age, consent, and compensation are not recorded, we have no real way of truly knowing. Seeing is not believing when it comes to porn. Are we really going to trust an industry whose greatest safeguard is an "Are you 18?" button?

Q: How long does it take people to "fix it?"

A: This is a bit of a loaded question. Usually what people actually mean by this is one of two things: can you quit cold turkey, or how long do you need to be sober before you don't have a problem anymore? It is important to remember that cold turkey is another way of saying "eventually I had a last time". Some people get around to their last setback faster than others. The idea that you can declare a setback to be officially the very last is just silly. What matters is making a plan, learning and being patient, focusing on the positive and building healthy connections. This is not an excuse, it is a reality. [Recovery is not simply a result of willpower, it is the result of practice.](#) Ready for a hard truth? Porn will probably always be something you have a weakness for. That does not mean it will always be a problem for you or that you will always have setbacks. Recovery done right will fill your life with positive habits, supportive atmosphere, and strengthen your character. Porn may be just as accessible and destructive, but you can become stronger. The problem is, asking how long that will take is like asking how long it takes to get a six-pack. It depends. Everyone is different and everyone will have a different journey but that doesn't make it any less possible.



3 REASONS WHY PORN ADDICTION DOESN'T MAKE YOU A BAD PERSON

<http://blog.fortifyprogram.org/blog/2015/9/28/3-reasons-why-porn-addiction-doesnt-make-you-a-bad-person>

Porn addiction sucks. Plain and simple.

We at the [Fortify Program](#) hear first hand from countless people the toll that pornography takes on the lives of those who depend on it. Addicts often create a cocktail of mental, physical and emotional issues ranging from depression, to porn-induced erectile dysfunction, or the entire spectrum of anxieties and insecurities. Just to name a few.

We say again—porn addiction sucks. But does that make you a bad person?

Nope.

But we know that's probably how you feel a lot of the time. We can get trapped under the crushing weight of blame and guilt. We get stuck walking circles around all the thoughts that keep us feeling so hopeless.

"If I was strong enough, I would be able to quit."

"Every time I look at porn I feel terrible but I keep doing it anyways. Why am I so weak?"

"I've been trying to stop for years and can't. Maybe I'm just broken."

While you may feel justified in these thoughts, none of them are true. The problem is that all of these feelings are born from our addictions. They don't motivate us to change, they just make us feel inadequate. If we don't learn how to cut ourselves some slack, they could keep us trapped forever. The following three reasons are why you are not broken, you can change, and you will.

UNDERSTANDING SHAME

There are actually two kinds of shame: regular shame and toxic shame. The main difference is that regular shame lets us know we made a mistake, while toxic shame teaches us that we *are* a mistake.

Toxic shame is hopeless and tells us that the struggles we go through are an unchangeable part of our existence, that failure is inescapable. But with regular shame, we believe that our mistakes are fixable and that they have nothing to do with us as a person. Proper shame can motivate us to grow and learn.

Addiction can feel like a constant oil spill of toxic shame pouring into our lives. To be truly happy and free, we need to start to clean it up. A great way to start this is called self-care. Basically you need to [give yourself the space to heal](#). This can be as simple as reading a positive quote in the morning to start your day off right. Eventually Fortifiers should begin to [build a life that sustains positivity and hope](#).

FEELINGS ARE NOT TRUTH

One Fortifier recently emailed us with a great explanation of this principle:

"One of your lessons I just finished really stood out to me in a way that none of the others have. It talks about watching your thoughts without being your thoughts, and more specifically watching your FEELINGS without being your feelings. Something that I have always had a rough battle with are my emotions. I often act out of the way I feel, and it is usually in a way more noticeable than the way most people act out on their feelings. I often become a slave to my own thoughts, I let them flow through my head every night before I go to sleep. "You are always going to be alone" or "you are not important" or "you can't succeed." For so long I have let these thoughts become a large part of me and have allowed my actions to be dictated by them. This really changed my perspective on my own thoughts and feelings in a way that I didn't know was possible. Not only has this advice been really beneficial for my recovery but it has given me a new outlook on who I am and how I carry out my actions in my life."

-Luke, Teen Fortifier

Feelings are important, but they don't make you who you are. What you do with them does. Wanting to act out in your addiction isn't what's bad, it's when you follow through with it that makes it harmful. Accept this part of the recovery process and you will be a lot happier in your journey.

DON'T BLAME THE PAST, GET A NEW ONE

Most porn addicts report that even though they were exposed to pornography at a very young age, they still somehow knew that it was "bad for you." They *felt* that it wasn't healthy. But they didn't know how to deal with it. Think about it: McDonald's is bad for you but if you hand a kid a Happy Meal they aren't going to reply, "No thanks, I'm going gluten free." Sometimes it takes age and maturity to right our wrongs.

No matter how long you have struggled, how old you are or were when porn first crept into your life, there is no way you could have been equipped to deal with it. We often use the past as evidence of our failures, a ledger that lists the reasons of how little we are worth. Just remember that hindsight is 20/20.

Looking back on the past with current experience and knowledge can make our mistakes feel so trivial and avoidable. This just leads us to blame ourselves. Instead of using the past as a hindrance to your recovery, focus on today. Today's will become yesterday's and eventually you will have a whole new past.

A Note For Partners

If you are close to someone who is struggling with a porn addiction, be careful that you don't do more harm than good by not accepting their struggle. Addiction is tough and even though you may have been left feeling betrayed and hurt by it, turning that pain back toward your loved one will only knock them down further. Just like you, they need to believe that they have the support of wholehearted, trustworthy people. Both parties need the space to heal.

4 SCIENTIFIC STUDIES THAT PROVE PORN CAN BE BEATEN

<http://blog.fortifyprogram.org/blog/2015/10/15/4-scientific-studies-that-prove-porn-can-be-beaten>

We talk a lot about the doom and gloom of porn addiction. How it will affect our brains, ruin relationships, etc, etc. That information can be important and help us create better strategies for our recovery but let's be honest; it can also be really depressing. So let's look at the other side of the equation, most of the science that supports how harmful porn can be also proves that recovery is possible. More than possible; biological.

- **Once porn is left behind, the brain pathways it created will start to fade.** • Doidge, Norman. *The Brain that Changes Itself*. New York: Viking, 2007. —

Have you heard the “feed the right wolf” analogy? If not, it's pretty simple.

If there are two metaphorical wolves locked in a power struggle, you can decide the outcome by choosing to feed one or the other. As one influence or “wolf” becomes stronger the other becomes weaker. This is exactly what happened when we started getting involved with porn, we kept feeding it and it got stronger. If we turn the tables it can be our way out.

As we build positive influences into our lives and gain more and more distance from pornography the pathways in our brain that tell us we need it will start to shrink. It will be slow but it will happen.

- **When a brain that has become accustomed to chronic overstimulation stops getting that overstimulation, neurochemical changes in the brain start happening. As a result, many users report withdrawal symptoms.** • Avena, N. M. and P. V. Rada. “Cholinergic modulation of Food and Drug Satiety and Withdrawal.” *Physiology & Behavior* 106, no. 3 (2012): 332–36. —

This might sound bad but it is actually very good. Like a marathon runner who learns to love the burn because it means they are growing stronger and faster we can celebrate the pain. Withdrawal sucks and it can be frustrating but it means our brain is changing. Instead of looking at it as evidence of how messed up you are think of it like burning calories or soreness after a workout.

And guess what? People have found that when they approach their withdrawal symptoms with this type of positivity they find them less powerful and shorter. So it's a win-win.

- **The brain can regain sensitivity to healthy, everyday activities.** • Lisle, Douglas and Alan Goldhamer. *The Pleasure Trap*. Summertown, TN: Healthy Living Publications. —

One of the main parts of our brain that is affected by porn use is our reward center. Basically what happens is that thing gets over-clocked. This results in it producing less of the “happy chemicals” (dopamine, serotonin, adrenaline, etc) and also becomes less responsive to them. Which means it takes more to make us feel good.

If we eliminate porn as our main source of these chemical releases our brain will start looking for new ones. We need start to connecting to positive things in our live that support our physical, emotional, mental and social health. These connections might start off small but they will grow and eventually replace the old neural pathways.

- **Research indicates that damaged frontal lobes can recover once constant overstimulation stops.** • Kim, Seog Ju, In Kyoonyoung Lyoo, Jaewook Hwang, Ains Chung, Young Hoon Sung, Ji Hyun Kim, Do-Hoon Kwon, Kee Hyun Chang, and Perry Renshaw. "Prefrontal Grey-matter Changes in Short-term and Long-term Abstinent Methamphetamine Abusers." The International Journal of Neuropsychopharmacology, 9 (2006): 221–28.

Addiction can cause actual brain-damage, the most common of which is frontal-lobe shrinkage. This is the part of the brain that deals primarily with choice, logic and reasoning. This change is one of the main reasons scientists believe addictions can become so powerful, it's like we're missing the part of our brain that helps us make good choices.

What's the silver lining?

It grows back!

Like anything it takes time but victory after victory will make a difference. The coolest part is that as our brain gets healthier it can theoretically get easier. Recovery teaches us core principles and builds specific habits that support the development of that decision-making part of our brain. Think of it like a muscle that gets bigger and stronger the more you use it.

All it takes is practice.



BRIAN'S STORY: FREEDOM IS RIGHT AROUND THE CORNER

<http://blog.fortifyprogram.org/blog/2015/9/10/brians-story-freedom-is-right-around-the-corner>

It is a bright Saturday afternoon. I am sitting in church keenly following the program. The choir is singing beautifully. Everyone is looking on.

Just then, a lady comes and sits in the empty chair besides me. "Hi," she says and I turn to look. It's a very good friend of mine. After a bit of catching up, amidst the singing of the choir, she picks up my phone and begins perusing through the picture gallery. I begin shivering. My heart beats faster. I feel like snatching the phone away. But I can't. What would she think if I did? All I do is pray that she doesn't look at my browser history.

I hold my breath.

I keep a side eye, just in case, becoming more and more restless.

Well, my name is Brian and such were my experiences before I decided that enough was enough. I would look at pornography all night long and forget to clear my browser history. I would even, at times, forget to delete the videos I had downloaded. Anxiety was something very normal to me then. Anyone going into my room, perusing through my phone or at my browser history, all made me very anxious. I lived in constant fear that I would be discovered.

My hopelessness worsened the situation. I considered myself a wretched being, devoid of any purpose in life. I knew that I could never make it without help from outside. Inside me there was no strength, I was too weak. Yet, I hoped for freedom every day. I really begged that one day help would come.

I kept searching. Filtration and accountability programs had failed me, making me feel more hopeless. I wanted to stop using porn but I just could not. Sometimes, I would do nothing the whole day other than watch porn and masturbate.

One afternoon, after wasting an entire morning acting out, I lay in my bed staring at the ceiling. "What should I do?" I asked myself. I seemed to have no solution. I gave up on thinking. I picked up my phone again and opened the browser. This time I looked for something very different. Unconsciously, I typed in "Overcoming pornography addiction." As I scrolled through the results, I saw an ad for [Fight The New Drug](#). I clicked and found myself redirected to The Fortify Program. I quickly read through. These people are promising me freedom from porn in one month, I thought. My eyes widened. I sat straight. Reading closely, I understood what it was all about.

I immediately applied for the teen program. I was exceedingly excited. When I received an acceptance email, my joy knew no bounds.

I am now forty days into the program and I can confidently say that freedom is right around the corner. The program has empowered me to fight. It has given me a reason to be hopeful. Although I have relapsed at times, I have always fought again. Only 37% through the program, I am already feeling very uplifted and hopeful. I rarely have anything to hide. My mood is always constant, instead of perpetual ups and downs. My life is coming back once again. The person that I was before porn is slowly coming back. The fulfillment I find in life nowadays is immense.

I sincerely appreciate the Fortify team for such an initiative. You are giving people back their lives. This is indeed the noblest pursuit that man can ever do.

Keep it moving. Keep it strong. Keep fortifying lives. Thank you so much Team Fortify.

MY STORY: THE GIRL WHO BEAT HER ADDICTION TO PORN

<http://blog.fortifyprogram.org/blog/2015/9/10/my-story-the-girl-who-beat-her-addiction-to-porn>

My story is probably one you've heard a thousand times. When I was way too young, I heard words I didn't understand and saw some things I shouldn't have. Porn planted a seed in me that grew and grew until it took over and robbed me of my happiness, my relationships and countless other things. I found myself repeatedly seeking things that shocked and disgusted me but I kept going back. The crazy part was that I was so overwhelmed by the desire for more that I didn't even realize what it was doing to my life. It wasn't until a role model from my church taught us about the harmful effects about pornography that I realized I had a problem. It was the first time someone talked to us girls about it openly and honestly. It hurt to understand what I was doing to myself but it was just what I needed to understand I really needed to change.

After this realization, it still took me a while to understand I could not beat this alone. My family relationships had always been rocky so I turned to a trusted leader. I remember him telling me that I would always be tempted by porn but if I could really work at it, those feelings would grow smaller and smaller. This actually inspired me. It wasn't rainbows and sunshine—it was real hope. He became my accountability partner and we met regularly to review my progress. He always believed that I could change and he helped me to believe it myself.

The biggest help to me was my fateful run in with The Fortify Program. I had somehow found out about Fight The New Drug online and so it was always all over my Facebook feed. But what really started a new change in me was when FTND posted something about their Fortify Program, specifically designed to help teenagers all around the world like me escape the strangling hands of pornography. I signed up for admission and was accepted. The Fortify Program was absolutely amazing for me. It was exactly what I had been looking for to help me. It shared so many new bits of information I had never seen and it gave great analogies about the harmful effects of pornography. It had a setback/victory calendar that could be filled out daily and any setbacks could be marked with a how, where, what time, to help you know when I was most vulnerable. One thing I loved that might not mean much to others but was encouraging to me was that the marker colors for a setback is pink and a victory is blue. This is something I loved because it wasn't red and green simply representing "bad" and "good." This let me know that I wasn't just passing and failing but that I was slowly and surely recovering. It was a more subtle message that was powerful for me. It may seem like a small thing, but for me, it made a huge impact.

The Fortify Program talked me through new ideas for how to deal with temptation. It gave detailed information about the addiction cycle (talk about mind blown) and it gave places for me to write about my experiences and what I thought about what was being said. If you reached a certain goal, you got a new badge to motivate you to keep trying and keep doing better. To sum it all up, I love The Fortify Program. Without it, my recovery would not have been anywhere near as rapid or permanent.

It was a long couple of years. I had a lot of setbacks. I wanted to cry a lot of the time. I wanted to give up so many times. I wanted to be done with the struggle and just finally be free. But as difficult as it was in those times, my hope, my accountability partner, and Fortify kept me going. I am proud to say that I am nearly one year porn free. I have been able to crawl most of the way out of a deep depression that I had throughout my addiction, and my relationships with the people around me have gotten much stronger.

If you or someone you know is addicted to pornography and needs help getting free, the first thing you need to know is that it is tough. Ending an addiction to pornography is the most difficult thing I have ever done in my life. But the temporary satisfaction of seeing a picture on the computer screen is absolutely nothing compared to the freedom of being able to choose something productive, fun, and social. It is worth it to have a boyfriend or girlfriend who loves you for you, and not because he/she just wants to try something he/she saw in porn. It is worth it to be able to control your emotions around your family and friends, rather than feeling angry or depressed all the time. It is worth it to not feel the need to lock yourself in a room so you and your computer screen can have some privacy. It is worth it because lasting happiness does not come from a screen, and it does not come from viewing fake sex from strangers. I promise you, it is worth it to escape pornography.

Pornography harms. Porn kills love. I know it from personal experience and I would never go back.

Thank you FTND and Fortify for helping me to change my life for the better.

MY STORY: LEARNING TO LOVE

<http://blog.fortifyprogram.org/blog/2015/9/10/my-story-learning-to-love>

The Fortify Program is about recovery and recovery is about connection. This puts Fortifiers on a quest to learn how to love, and love for real. Like we always say: it's not always easy but it's always worth it.

This was completely true for Erin. She proved that even through the ups and downs you can come out on top. Check out what she has to say:

Hey, my name is Erin and Fortify helped me find recovery from my addiction. This is my story.

"You are so innocent, if only you were a little bit less moral," he said to me. The time had come, I finally had to tell him that I have my own skeletons and I had to share my struggle with him. It is time to tell him that the reason I have such high morals when it comes to sex is because I know from personal experience how dangerous pornography can be. It is my hope that sharing my story with him, will make him realize why porn kills love. Yet every time I have this conversation, I can never find the right words. I think that is because you can't make it sound pretty, you can't put words in just the right order to make it sound better than it was. Because porn isn't pretty at all, it's disturbing, addictive, and kills love.

I started watching pornography when I was in early middle school. It started out as simple curiosity, nothing more than pictures. Then I found videos and that only fueled my curiosity. Before I knew it, I was a middle school girl who was addicted to pornography. I was raised in a religious home and knew that it was wrong, but I was in so deep at that point I didn't know how to stop. I felt all alone, [and lived in fear of anyone finding out for years](#).

Despite my efforts of quitting pornography cold turkey, I failed over and over again. I never had success at quitting until my sophomore year of college using the [Fortify Program](#). (Serious, if you have an addiction to porn and you want recovery, check out Fortify. It can't hurt).

So besides being addicted, how did pornography affect me? Are you ready for this? I am a 21 year old and have never been in a relationship. Yep, you heard me right.

Now before you start pointing fingers and telling me that it isn't solely because of pornography I understand that, and I get that plenty of people don't date until they're older. But let me tell you the role that pornography played in that for me.

Once I was addicted to pornography, as disturbing as this is, I desired that over an actual relationship. I would notice cute boys in the hallway, but it ended there. I never wanted to pursue that. Looking back, I can see how porn changed the ways I looked at guys. I started thinking that all guys wanted was sex, and I wasn't willing to do that - being addicted to porn was already hard enough and there was no way I was ready for that kind of relationship. Every time I looked at porn, I was choosing a fake idea of love that left me feeling empty, hopeless, and unworthy of real love. Once I started making progress in recovering, I desired to pursue real relationships. Relationships that show there is so much more to a person than just their body.

Real love is a beautiful thing. One of the hardest parts of recovery is telling an accountability partner. I was terrified of telling my best friend because I was afraid that she would judge me, think I was gross, think there was something wrong with me, and most of all not love me anymore. But I was wrong, she listened and [loves me still because I chose to be vulnerable with her](#).

So here I am, still trying to find the right words to tell a friend what I struggle with. The conversation does get easier, but it is never easy. When we chose to love, that is when we are vulnerable with other people. I am choosing real love.

WE DO HARD THINGS: A LOOK AT LIFE WITH FORTIFY

<http://blog.fortifyprogram.org/blog/2015/9/10/we-do-hard-things-a-look-at-life-with-fortify>

Right now, there are over 20,000 people from around the world signed up for The Fortify Program. Each and every one of these individuals has their own set of struggles and stories. One thing we know that they all have in common is that they are trying their hardest to become the person they want to be and they are determined not to let porn stand in the way.

We wanted to find out what some of these people's lives were like before and after starting Fortify so we asked a couple Fortifiers to tell us about their journey. That is when we heard from Andrew* (real person, fake name). His story proves that even though the solution isn't a quick fix or miracle pill, recovery matters and every little victory makes a difference.

Take a look at Andrew's experience with Fortify:

Hi, I'm Andrew and I am currently a junior in high school.

I guess I'll just dive right in. I first saw pornography when I was in middle school at the age of 13. At the time I had no clue or idea about the harmful effects of pornography. No one had specifically warned me about porn. It only took about a week for the habit to form, even though it started sparsely.

On top of my addiction I was bullied throughout middle school and into the beginning of high school. As a result of pornography and being bullied I quickly became depressed and I started viewing others as objects and not as real people. After adult interference the boy mostly responsible for the bullying apologized to me. Even after the bullying had stopped I would still get really bad depression. Before the porn had been a coping mechanism but now I more or less used it just because of habit. I hated it and I couldn't stop. Now I had no one to blame for my depression, I had no reason to be watching porn, no excuse. That is when I realized that it had become an addiction and that I could not break free.

So I decided to try, by myself. I wanted (And I still do) to become a father and have my own family and I knew porn would get in way of that, or damage those relationships. But no matter how hard I tried by myself, I would end up just getting back into the cycle of porn, regret, shame and depression. At this time in my life I was pretty isolated. I had few friends and I felt really alone. I made a choice: I decided to kill myself. Obviously, and very luckily, I'm still here.

After my suicide attempt I became weak. I gave into my addiction. Even though I tried hard to space out when I viewed porn it started becoming more frequent.

That's when I found the fortify program. It has helped give me tools to fight this addiction. I've also opened up to my parents about my struggles and they have helped get me therapy for my depression. I reached out to my parents after starting Fortify, though at the time I didn't know about accountability partners. To be honest I have yet to confront them about being an accountability partner through the Fortify website, but it is something I want to do soon for sure. That way I have more power and support to stop this addiction. I'm getting more practice with the use of tools from the program like STAR ([Read more here](#)). I am now proud to say that I have beat my depression. At least for now. And though I am still fighting this addiction, and my anxiety hasn't gone away, I know that I will be free of it.

When I was enveloped in porn every single day, it made it so tiring to get in to my passions. I love to play the violin, but it felt tiring to do it since I was so hollow emotionally. But my anxiety pushed me to be perfect in my playing because I was afraid someone would notice. The combination of the depression and anxiety was honestly exhausting. Now that I am in recovery I have gained so much joy and fulfillment in my hobbies and especially practicing my music. And every time an urge hits I can turn to my passions and it will go away. They are part of what helps me to be happy now, instead of dragging me down like everything seemed to do before.

My advice to all Fighters is to don't be ashamed. Feeling guilt and being shameful are two different things. Shame is where you are embarrassed, or afraid and therefore hide something. Guilt is where you feel bad for what you did and will do anything to not do it again. Have the courage to feel guilt and fight! I see that more and more I'm becoming the person I want to be because I am trying. Even if you fail, don't forget to never stop fighting! Also, if you're struggling with depression or suicidal thoughts, then get help! Tell your parents, or call the suicide hotline. They're there to listen! Always remember what side you're on!

Join with me and we can fight together!

-Andrew

THE TRUTH ABOUT FREEDOM

<http://blog.fortifyprogram.org/blog/2015/9/10/the-truth-about-freedom>

What are we willing to fight for?

Most of the time the things we fight over are pretty trivial. Things like who's turn it is to pick the movie, who gets the last piece of pizza, etc. Sometimes these things can feel really important in the moment and we spend a lot of energy seeing that justice is done.

But do we spend that same amount of energy fighting for what matters? Or are we blind to the meaningful things in our lives that we can take for granted? The scary truth is that there can be things in our lives that harm and enslave us, and it's too late before we notice. Any type of addiction has the power to worm its way into our minds and hijack our thoughts.

Freedom to think and feel.

I want to be free from my addiction. It's starting to affect my emotions and twist my thoughts. - Male Fortifier, 15-years-old

We hear things like this everyday. Porn addiction affects people's lives in very real ways and there is specific science behind why this happens.

The chemical oxytocin, which is released during intimacy, works as an eraser for old brain pathways, melting them away so that large-scale rewiring can happen. In a relationship, this helps by erasing old, selfish pathways and making room for new ones focused on the combined success of the couple. (*Norman Doidge, The Brain that Changes Itself.*) However, porn can do just the opposite - erasing old couple-centric pathways to build new ones around the self-centered and unrealistic things seen in porn.

Like any addiction, porn teaches us to focus on ourselves. It is a completely self-gratifying experience. We train ourselves to seek more and more. We condition our mind to look for bigger, better, newer, stranger experiences. We discover the shocking novelties the internet has to offer and they reward us with a rush of chemicals in the brain unlike any other.

But isn't this freedom? Freedom to do what you want and what makes you feel good?

Not really.

These chemicals that flood our brains while we consume porn literally change how we think and feel. The honest truth is that without self-control we can easily become controlled by our urges. Then the only thing we will be free to do is continue to feed more urges. Eventually, we will build a mind that can trap us in our own desires.

Gathering the troops.

Part of the word *addict* comes from a latin root that means "surrendered." To be addicted means to give in to something, to be taken over. An addicted brain is territory occupied by an enemy.

Finding out that there are things in our society, our homes, and in our lives that have the potential to take our freedom hostage should motivate us. We won't roll over and let this happen. We aren't going to shrug and accept this for what it is. We will never, *ever* accept this is "normal".

Rise up in rebellion.

But what if it's too late? What if your life is already out of control? What if you don't know if you can ever be free again?

To that, we say it is never too late! There is no such thing as a point of no return when it comes to addiction. You can always reclaim your freedom from addiction. The pathways that porn builds in your brain can be broken down. All you have to do is fight smart and be strong.

Be a smart Fortifier.

A smart Fortifier is diligent. They revisit their Battle Strategies, pay attention to their Battle Tracker, and use tools like STAR as much as they can. They know that Fortify is not a one-time thing and they study and learn as much as they can for as long as they need.

A smart Fortifier is patient. They see a setback as a battle lost, but not the war. They always use what they learn from defeat as well as victory. They know that change might be slow going but that their freedom is worth the fight. They won't be caught off guard.

A smart Fortifier is humble. They know this is a personal struggle but they know they should never have to fight alone. They rely on their Accountability Partner and pledge to live honestly, even when it's hard. They know that they are weaker when they isolate themselves with secrets. Remember: Fortifiers know they can't fight alone.

Freedom is worth it.

There is no greater cause or noble endeavor than the pursuit of freedom. There may always be things in our lives that are unfair and unjust. Other people can make choices that harm or hinder us and we will have to cross those bridges when they come. But no one has the power to design true freedom for us. Only we control our future. With hard work and resolve, we can become the people we want to be. A person who is free to think and feel how they wish.

Freedom is a heart unhindered and a mind uncaged. If we strive to live a life where we are truly free, maybe the world will follow.

"THE POWER OF VULNERABILITY" FOR FORTIFIERS

<http://blog.fortifyprogram.org/blog/2015/9/10/the-power-of-vulnerability-for-fortifiers>

Why is recovery so hard?

Well, there are a lot of reasons. You are swimming upstream against what you have trained your brain to do and want. There are chemicals that you now crave in a very real way. You may have used porn to avoid negative feelings so much that you no longer know how to deal with things like stress or negativity. But perhaps most of all, recovery is hard because it requires you to be completely vulnerable.

That can be scary.

Watch the video: [The Power of Vulnerability](#)

What Dr. Brown suggests in her TEDxTalk is that we become a “whole-hearted” person. Vulnerability is the opposite of what we do when we watch porn. Porn creates a cheap and temporary pleasure that numbs us emotionally. It numbs all the bad (and the good) and leaves us feeling empty. Then when we come down from the high and feel things that we don’t like, we turn back to our addiction to escape and around and around it goes. If we are open and honest with ourselves and others about our situation we will discover a way to live where we can handle the bad and enjoy the good.

Here is a custom version of Dr. Brown’s *to-do list*, specifically for Fortifiers. Follow these tips and you’ll have a whole heart in no time.

Let Ourselves Be Seen

Addictions make us want to hide but that [isolation is dangerous](#). Reach out to those closest to you for support. Give them the chance to prove that they accept and love you. Remember: recovery is not about being perfect, it’s about learning how to live in a healthy way. We all have flaws and we always will; flaws make us who we are.

Love With Our Whole Hearts

This one is a big deal and it goes both ways. As you take steps toward recovery, you are regaining and relearning your ability to love. It is a skill and it requires practice. Trust and love, even if it’s scary. Believe that you deserve that trust and love in return.

Practice Gratitude And Joy

Another way to say this is to practice *positive self talk*. Don’t get down on yourself, [even when it’s hard or you’ve messed up](#). Celebrate your victories and learn to embrace the struggle. Like we said earlier, you are escaping the numbness that porn has created and instead of temporarily self-medicating, you are learning to live with the good *and* the bad. Be grateful for both.

Believe You Are Enough

You are and always have been enough. You are learning more and getting smarter and that says something about your desire to recover. You have struggles and triumphs just like everyone else, but all these things are *yours*. Own the fact that you have what it takes, the capacity to be the best version of yourself. Start with that and you will be in the right place to make the right changes.

WHITE TORTURE: HOW ISOLATION FEEDS ADDICTION

<http://blog.fortifyprogram.org/blog/2015/9/10/white-torture-how-isolation-feeds-addiction>

Imagine being trapped in a room or any other space. There is nothing around you. You see nothing, you hear nothing, you smell nothing, you taste nothing and you feel nothing. How long before the quiet lack of stimulus would become unbearable?

The truth is, after a while you would start to lose any sense of things that are so fundamental to our human experience - time, memory, progression and self would all begin to fade.

This is exactly the idea behind what's called 'Sensory Deprivation Torture' or *White Torture*.

This practice is defined as follows:

"White torture is a type of psychological torture that includes extreme sensory deprivation and isolation. Carrying out this type of torture makes the detainee lose personal identity through long periods of isolation."

Think about that. Extreme isolation that makes you actually lose your personal identity.

People can use this to demoralize, demotivate and dominate others after they are so emotionally weak from feeling alone for so long.

So what does this have to do with addiction or pornography? To explain, let's first look at some of the things we hear from addicts and Fortifiers every day.

I've never felt so alone.

I don't know who I am anymore.

I just want to be myself again.

I'm so tired of carrying this weight around.

I can barely remember what I was like before porn.

Are you seeing the problems here?

The fact is that the isolation that we can experience from any addiction, especially that of pornography, produces the same result as white torture: the loss of your self-identity.

The Walls We Build

The power behind pornography and how it drives users to isolation is often based off of two things: secrecy and shame.

- Secrecy is so problematic because the very act of holding on to something that you think others will judge you for creates an atmosphere where you set yourself apart from the people around you. Secrets rob us of the ability to trust ourselves because we don't feel trustworthy to others. That lack of trust will very quickly give way to shame.

- Shame is almost always bad. But did you know there is such thing as good shame? Good shame motivates us to be better and shows us that we need to make some changes. A good version of shame tells us that we *made* a mistake. Bad shame says we *are* a mistake. We call this toxic shame - shame that makes us feel hopeless or powerless. Instead of a try-try again mentality, toxic

shame says just give up, you'll never beat this anyway. These thoughts are toxic because they can pollute the rest of our mind. Be able to tell the difference between feeling ashamed that you messed up but want to do better and shame that tells you that it's hopeless.

Water and a Crust of Bread

When we find ourselves in a state of self-doubt and insecurity it is most likely that we have already started to cut lifelines that could have grounded us. Friends, family, school, clubs, and hobbies can all become casualties of our addiction as one negative influence takes over: porn.

We constantly talk about how porn addiction overflows the pleasure centers and reward pathways in our brain, but it can also solidify our isolation. The high we get from using porn can start to feel like our only escape from the hollow empty space we live in.

Sadly, what goes up must come down... hard.

Porn can become the tray of food pushed through the door of our padded cells. We feel like it sustains us, keeps us going, but it is only a product of our captivity. We become so dependent on it that we reject the real world. The lazy counterfeit feels easier and better than the actual connections we have given up on.

Remember: it is fake. It cages you. But remember, you can break free.

Doors Without Locks

Our secrets and our shame helped build these walls but we will need some help to tear them down.

To use the old phrase: honesty is the best policy.

It's true though. Reaching out to another person who cares about you and can be trusted to guide you towards your goals can be amazing. We all need someone who can help us remember who we really are and what we really want. Hold strong to those people who can show you that you made some mistakes but that don't make you feel broken beyond repair.

In the Fortify Program, we call these people Accountability Partners. If you don't have one yet, get one. In the addiction recovery process, reaching out to someone and asking for help is a huge turning point.

Patience Is A Virtue

The last thing to remember is that this is a process. It will take a while to learn to break out of secrecy and trust yourself again. It will take a bit for you to be able to determine if what you are feeling is helpful shame or harmful shame. Having someone that you can consistently turn to will help you start to see yourself and the world in a better light. You don't have to surround yourself with the white noise of your addiction, instead fill your life with love. That love will lead you to becoming the real you, the you you've always wanted to be.

We know how scary this can be. Take a leap of faith but don't take it alone. Fighting this fight on your own will be much harder and much more painful. Trust us. With your resolve to be better and a good support system around you, things will get better.

THE 4 TYPES OF PEOPLE YOU NEED TO TELL ABOUT YOUR PORN ADDICTION

<http://blog.fortifyprogram.org/blog/2015/9/21/accountability-4-people-you-need-to-tell-about-your-porn-addiction>

Anyone who has tried to quit watching porn probably knows that it is a lot harder to do alone. This is because [pornography feeds off of our isolation](#) and makes it harder to get help. Even though it's hard, involving important people in our journey to recovery is a huge step for almost every Fortifier.

But those pesky questions still remain: who exactly should I talk to? Should I tell all of them, or just a couple? What if they don't understand or judge me? And more than that, how do we get around the guilt, shame and embarrassment I feel about my addiction?

No two people struggling with a porn addiction will have the same answers when dealing with these questions. But there are people who can help you navigate them. The following list details the different categories of people in your life whom you need to talk to about your struggle. A lot of these categories will overlap, but that's ok. There is no real limit to who you should tell, as long as it's going to help. Confiding in someone about your journey to recovery is a personal choice that you should consider carefully, but it doesn't have to be a huge deal. Because let's be honest, most of us could use all the help we can get.

THE PEOPLE WHO TAKE CARE OF YOU

This could mean something very different for a lot of people but it is a good place to start. Confide in the people who you respect, look up to, and have qualities you want to develop in yourself. For many of us this is a parent, spouse, or other older relative. But for others, your main caretaker could exist outside your family. Often people will talk to school counselors or religious leaders when needing advice and guidance. Whatever your situation, the key here is to seek out someone who you know has your best interest at heart and is capable of investing in your recovery.

THE PEOPLE YOU LOVE

The people in this category also fall into the category above but this one could be a little different for some. Regardless of whether your relationship is romantic or platonic, these relationships are the ones entirely based upon honesty and communication. Opening up to the people you are closest to gives you a chance to [grow together through vulnerability](#). Being completely open and vulnerable with these people will be very rewarding and teach you to trust yourself.

THE PEOPLE YOU TRUST

We understand that not everyone has an ideal family or social life. In many cases it can be very difficult for people to find someone who can be a firm part of their recovery. When looking at your friends and peers, make sure you choose someone who you can trust. An accountability partner should always be someone who understands what you are up against and wants to help you meet your goals. This group contains the lion-hearted friends that you know will always have your back. Stay true to them by being open with them and they will reward you with their undying support.

THE PEOPLE WHO NEED YOUR HELP

As you begin to open up and share with those around you, it is likely you will discover others going through the same thing. This can be a great opportunity for the both of you. Forming a close-knit group of those who are on the journey to recovery is an amazing resource. It is not something that you should force, but if the opportunity arises, consider it a valuable opportunity. Seeking change together with a peer that is fully committed to recovery will strengthen you both immeasurably.

HOW TO START THE CONVERSATION

The first rule of talking about your addiction is honesty. There is no need for explicit details but there is a need for absolute truth.

Be earnest with whoever you approach in expressing your need for help and your desire to change. There is no specific formula of what to say but if you need some inspiration try something like this:

"Hey, can I talk to you for a second? I trust you a lot and that's why I am talking to you now. I think I need your help with something that I've been struggling with. I want you to understand that I have tried to deal with it on my own for some time but feel that to truly overcome this I will need your help and possibly the help of others. I've been struggling with pornography, and after learning firsthand how addictive and enslaving it is, I've realized that I can't overcome it on my own. So I enrolled in the Fortify program—a program developed for those struggling with an addiction to pornography—and it has helped me understand the importance of getting someone like you involved. I feel like I need to be accountable to somebody, and I'm hoping that you will be willing to be that person. Will you be my accountability partner? It would help if we got together at least once a week to talk about my challenges and progress as well as discuss ideas on how I can continue to improve. I may eventually invite others as well to strengthen my support and chances of recovery. This is a very personal issue and I trust that you will keep this between us until I am comfortable opening up to other people. Thank you for listening and understanding. That means a lot to me and I already feel more confident in my ability to beat this with your help."

If you're still stumped you can try breaking the ice with this Fortify Accountability Partner video: <http://bit.ly/1glI7Du>. This will not only help them understand your struggle but also briefly explain the nature of porn addiction. This video will help to coach accountability partners on some things they can help with. It isn't the most directly personal approach but it can be an easy transition to starting some good conversations.

Remember, your addiction is a prison built on secrets, lies, shame, and isolation. Every time you open up to someone in honesty and love, you are breaking down one of those walls.

HOPE FOR THE BROKENHEARTED

<http://blog.fortifyprogram.org/blog/2015/9/10/hope-for-the-brokenhearted>

Porn addiction does not only affect the addicted. It creates a shockwave that impacts all of their relationships, especially those closest to them. This shock can be very hard to handle, and often, is traumatic for the people who love and care for someone struggling with a porn addiction. Parents, friends, and family will all feel the fallout and pain for their loved one, but no one will be affected more than spouses and partners.

Because porn addiction is such a new issue and has only really been around for the last few decades or from the dawn of the internet, we are constantly learning more about it. Most resources are dedicated to helping addicts, and often are only targeted toward men. The fact is, porn is not a picky. Anyone can be affected by it, either as an addict or because you are close to one. The good news is there are finally some materials and programs designed specifically to support the partners of porn addicts.

Introducing Bloom For Women

Although this program is not affiliated with Fortify, we are happy and excited to promote it.

Bloom For Women focuses on helping people recover from what is called *betrayal trauma*. For \$25/month you have access to a wide variety of courses designed to help you heal and understand. Many focus on the individual, guiding you through a process of restoring strength and security with everything from yoga instruction to self-help seminars. Others are designed to restore your relationships. Online videos outline topics like rediscovering intimacy and dealing with your partners addiction. There are even a few courses that build positive and healthy lifestyle habits like music or interior design!

Possibly the greatest aspect of Bloom is that it is constantly growing. With your subscription you have access to all current and future content. This includes the web courses, blogs, forums, web chats and anything that is added in the future.

The bottom line is having someone close to your struggle with an addiction can be earth shattering. We know how lost and helpless you can feel. There is hope, and you are not alone. Try the program for free and see if it's right for you.

3 REASONS WHY FORMER PORN ADDICTS CAN STILL MAKE GREAT PARTNERS

<http://blog.fortifyprogram.org/blog/2015/9/10/3-reasons-why-former-porn-addicts-can-still-make-great-partners>

Let's face some of life's harsh realities right off the bat:

- Magical slippers do not exist and will not transform someone into royalty.
- Woodland creatures will never come to your aid or make your clothes for you.
- The opportunity to defeat a dragon or a sea-witch will never come your way.

While fairytales unfortunately are not real, that doesn't mean that being in love in real life can't bring you a happiness that feels a lot like you're living in one. And that kind of happiness can only come from sharing your life with someone who is always there for you and loves you no matter what. We're not saying we have the almighty secret to finding your soulmate, but we do know one thing for sure: the person you spend your life with should be the one you want with you during the good times *and* the bad times.

Those who have struggled with porn can often feel that they are broken and beyond repair. They may feel like no one could ever love them due to their past. But someone who has beaten a struggle with porn can be a great partner *because* of this past struggle, not just in spite of it. Here are a few reasons why Fortifiers who have overcome their pornography addiction can be just as close to a Prince Charming or Darling Damsel as anyone else.

Pure Of Heart

Let's be real; we've all messed up. Mistakes are a part of life and no one is immune to them. A Fortifier is someone who has put their freedom and happiness as a top priority and changed their life to make them a reality. Goodness isn't about preserving some untouched version of ourselves, it's about constantly working toward it.

If you want to be with someone who understands the value of self-improvement and is always seeking to better themselves, those who have successfully overcome addictions as tough as pornography are at the top of the list.

True In Word

Addicts stay in a habit of lying while Fortifiers practice complete honesty and accountability.

Recovery is about breaking down walls and building connections. People need to be open and vulnerable so they can get to a place where their vices don't have power over them. One Fortifier gave this example in his recovery:

"Once I started my recovery, being honest became so important, almost sacred. Now it's just second nature, I have to be careful I don't just blurt out everything about myself on a first date."

With honesty and communication being two of the most vital parts of a relationship, ex-addicts have put into practice holding themselves accountable and being totally open with those closest to them.

Mighty In Deed

Here's a question: what would you do if you knew someone gave up everything for you? What if you knew that some had put themselves through hell to be able to love and to have you? What would you think after learning that someone fought tooth and nail for the sole purpose of being their best self for *you*?

Well, if you're dating a former addict, that's what has happened.

Everyone in the Fortify Program and everyone fighting porn is fighting for the ability to love and love for real. Maybe they have someone in their life already but it is often their future partners and family they are battling for. A recovered porn addict is someone that has valued the freedom to love so much that they literally changed their life to be able to have it. They have championed over their inner demons. And the best part?

They did it all for you.

BE YOUR OWN HERO

<http://blog.fortifyprogram.org/blog/2015/9/10/be-your-own-hero>

Who are our role models? Who do we look up to and aspire to be like? The greats, the influential and the well-loved are usually at the top of that list. But before you turn admiringly to your Michael Jordan poster, we suggest you make space for one more name: yours.

You're the main character in your own story and the only person who will ever live it cover to cover, so why not give yourself the leading role you deserve? Why not be the hero of your own story?

Fortifiers, if you've done any kind of program or counseling for your addiction, then you've heard a lot of terms like "powerlessness," "toxic shame," "hijacking," etc. All this talk can make us feel like we have zero control over what happens in our own lives. We feel too messed up, too broken. Sometimes we can lose track of the fact that we are the ones who have to make these changes. Here are some tips on how to do just that:

1. Don't Skip Training Day

Make this battle your passion. Eat, sleep, and breathe recovery. Play the *Rocky* theme song if you have to. Get pumped up and start making changes. Learn everything you can from the Fortify Program and use the tools like gadgets in your utility belt. Things like the [STAR Method](#) and [healthy rational responses](#) are your new go-to. Every superhero is what they are because they took the time to make it happen. It might not be as easy or quick as a movie montage but it is most definitely possible.

2. Know Your Kryptonite

Something you will discover as soon as you start this journey to heroism is that it is hard. Don't freak out. And don't stress. That's actually a good thing. Everyone has weaknesses, addict or not. We need to know what they are and how to avoid them. On top of that, we need to accept them. If we do not accept our weaknesses for what they are, then we are in denial.

Having a weakness is not the same as making a mistake. The only mistake is not working on our weaknesses to better ourselves. If we don't accept the fact that we are flawed, in an honest and forgiving way, we cannot progress. Know your limits and love yourself.

This is where fighting smart matters. We aren't talking about punching through walls here, we're talking about rebuilding your brain. Will power is huge but you need to do this right. Learn from your mistakes and give yourself room to grow. There will be victories and defeats during this fight but that doesn't mean you don't have what it takes to win this war. Set your goals, take things one day, one step at a time and don't forget to breathe.

3. Trust Your Sidekick

This is possibly the greatest trap for the hero; we all think we have to go it alone. We don't want anyone to get hurt. We think that we can fix it ourselves.

Where do you think Batman would be without Robin? Or Ironman without Jarvis? Harry without Ron and Hermione?

Nowhere.

This doesn't have to happen to you. [Addictions feed off of solitude and loneliness](#). Surround yourself with a support group, the bigger the better. Remember, each one of these people are the hero of *their* own story. They probably know a couple of tricks from their own stories and will be willing to help you in yours.

And there you have it, three easy steps and you have completed basic hero training. Whether you are a new recruit or a veteran fighter, keep these tips in mind. They will serve you well.

SELF-CONTROL AND FORTIFYING OUR BRAINS

<http://blog.fortifyprogram.org/blog/2015/9/10/self-control-and-fortifying-our-brains>

Have you ever been described as having an “addictive personality?”

For some reason you don’t just *like*; you *obsess*. You don’t watch; you binge. You don’t enjoy; you devour. You don’t get; you consume. You feel like you were born without breaks and you never know when to stop.

Keep in mind, this personality type is not always a bad thing. Some of the most successful people to ever live are those who are obsessively passionate and never quit until they reach their goals. But just like anything, there is a good side and a bad side.

Take a second and see if any of the following fits you.

- More often than not you forget to do things that you committed to.
- Your priorities are more and more out of whack.
- Maybe you are neglecting relationships, school is slipping, or your finances are out of control.

Like most addicts, life feels like something that is continually slipping through your fingers.

Sound familiar?

Ok, we’re not trying to make you feel bad here, we are just showing that the reality is that people who struggle with addictions often find that their lives can quickly go off the rails. Let’s be honest with ourselves, we are addicts and we have some issues to work through. It can be hard, but looking at the big picture of our habits and how we spend our time can help us change our whole lives and really improve our chances of overcoming our addictions.

In creating the Fortify Program, we realized that if we can identify the parts of our lives that keep us in our addictive cycle and replace them, then we will start to actually change the way we live.

Like almost everything that has to do with an addiction, there is a specific reason our lives are affected by this stuff.

Because science!

It’s simple really. Our brains are built with connections called neural pathways. Addictions create very deep, strong pathways and this causes them to dominate our way of thinking. Other habits, like excessive video game play or TV, unhealthy eating, compulsive shopping or anything that is ruled by a lack of control travel down these same pathways. Whatever it is, a habit that we use to escape the discomforts of life can fuel our addiction. So even if you’re porn free for a while you can still be on thin ice if you are indulging in other habits.

Think of it this way - porn has created a superhighway in your brain. It’s the biggest road and the easiest way for your brain to move its thoughts around. If you keep using the same highway because you are staying up late every night watching Netflix, it is never going to fully shut down.

If we want to change our lives, we have to start to use completely different ways of thinking/acting that create new, *healthy* pathways. This can be hard, and it can take a while, but it is totally worth it.

There are a couple rules to rebuilding our brains. Start with these and you'll be headed in the right direction:

Be real. Like, really real.

You need to take an honest look at your life and be willing to admit that some of the things you enjoy are not good for you. They may not be as damaging as a porn addiction but they might be contributing to the chains of your addiction. Do a personal inventory of how you spend your time and be ready to cut some things lose. You are after true freedom.

In with the good, out with the bad.

When you decide to change your habits there is a good chance that you'll find you have more free time. A lot more free time. You need something to fill your time and keep you interested. Boredom is not going to help you at all. There a lot of thing you can do but a couple of our favorites are exercise and creative interests.

Exercise is great because it floods your brain with oxygen, which is like MiracleGrow for your cells. You can start small if exercise isn't your thing. We're not saying you need to be an olympian. Going for a walk instead of gaming is a great start.

Any creative outlet is awesome because it uses new parts of your brain. Whether it's model airplanes or getting really into playing the tuba, bringing more creative interest into your life can unlock your passion and build new, healthy pathways in your brain that push the bad ones out.

Remember, you are not your addiction.

We've said it before and we'll say it again. What you've done does not define who you are. That term "addictive personality" may feel accurate but it does not define you at all. The fact that you have struggled with self-control in the past does not prove that you cannot change your life.

We want you to be yourself. We don't just see you as who you are right now, but also who you can be.

Looking at all the things you want to change in your life can be scary and overwhelming. Don't let that keep you from trying. The good news is that as you take control of one addiction, it will start to loosen the grip of the others. The mountain we have to move is made up of many small parts, and as we begin to remove some of them, the rest will start to crumble.

Don't settle, don't give up. Ever. You can do this!

HOW TO CHANGE YOUR BRAIN

<http://blog.fortifyprogram.org/blog/2015/9/10/how-to-change-your-brain>

It's no secret anymore. Porn is addictive.

There is a ton of research that points to this conclusion. And those trapped in the vicious cycle of porn addiction know all too well. They know how hard it is to walk away from pornography when it seems to be the only thing that makes them feel good. They know how damaging it is to relationships, and know how isolating of a behavior it is, even when they're surrounded by people who love them. Many people feel like there is no hope for the future, like porn has inflicted permanent damage and that it is impossible to break free.

That is simply not true.

Here at Fortify, we have the mission to help people who are already struggling and let them know that there is hope. An addiction to pornography CAN be overcome. Permanently. And here's why:

Your brain is plastic.

"Plastic" comes from the Greek word *plastos*, which means molded. When something is plastic, it means it can change shape.

Scientists used to think that once the human brain reached a certain part of development, it stopped growing and changing. They believed, as the old saying goes, that "you can't teach an old dog new tricks."

As it turns out, Harvard research shows that it is possible for the brain to change and develop no matter how old it is. The brain is an ever-changing thing. Your brain is made to change.

Check out this study as an example:

Researchers took a group of regular people and taught them to play a five-finger piano exercise, causing them to develop new motor skills and use different parts of their brain. They had to learn how to do the exercise perfectly and at a regular tempo. At the end of each practice, they had to take a test.

Before and after practice each day, the researchers would place a large electromagnetic coil against the subjects' foreheads to stimulate parts of their brain with electric currents. Their fingers would naturally respond to these currents by twitching or making small movements.

As the subjects continued to practice the piano and develop that part of their brains, it required less electric stimulation for their fingers to respond, and their fingers would respond to a greater degree even though they were being stimulated less.

Basically, their brain had changed. By continuously doing something, (in this case, playing the piano) it was activating new parts of their brain and new pathways were being formed.

Pretty cool, huh?

Well what's not cool is that porn also changes your brain, in a negative way. Continued exposure to porn will make you want more porn. You will gain a dependence to it. You will need more of it. You will need more hardcore versions of it. Your brain will encourage you to go back to it because

it knows that it makes you feel good. All these things happen because the brain has been changed due to porn use. And before you know it, you are having a hard time stopping.

But the brain can change. Through continued practice and effort, you can change your brain back. And it can be a lasting change. Due to neuroplasticity, the harmful effects of porn will fade away during recovery and eventually disappear all together. It is a process, and it takes commitment, but it can be done.

Bottom line: your brain can heal and recover. No matter how hard it may seem.

Keep at it, Fortifiers. We got your back!

(Click article link for citations)

3 EASY TIPS TO STAYING PORN-FREE

<http://blog.fortifyprogram.org/blog/2015/9/10/3-easy-tips-to-stay-porn-free>

The verdict is in and has been for a while now: porn is addictive and it can seriously harm your brain. Extended dopamine release, new neural pathways, frontal lobe shrinkage, the whole nine yards. But what does that mean for you? How does that effect how you see your life and the world around you?

Many people are affected by depression, anxiety, lethargy, and a blend of insecurities. The combination of the graphic and exaggerated nature of pornography, the falsified representation of beauty and sex, and the unsustainable highs start to work their way into our self-view very quickly. This is what Fortifiers deal with daily, the current we swim against.

So what can we do about it? Here are three simple tricks that can help you keep your head above water.

Stay Positive

This is so simple and very effective. Many addicts are working against years of "failure" that they feel only proves that they aren't strong enough to beat their struggle. Looking back on our past mistakes with the wrong mindset will always make us feel helpless and hopeless. Realize that we can only combat the now and that we have no control over the past. Let's give ourselves the chance to be enough.

Cut out every word in your vocabulary that puts you down. In the moments when you feel blue, tell yourself about your victories and focus on the strength you *do* have. Say it out loud if you have to. Some people even use a fake accent to motivate themselves. No joke, it lightens the mood almost instantly and shakes off the clouds. Dust off that old Scottish accent and give it a try.

Stay Busy

We talk about this one a lot but it matters. Plan out your days so you always have something to do. Even your downtime should be filled with relaxing hobbies that won't leave you feeling bored or restless. When you are bored, try to limit your screen time. Be social, active, or creative. Successful Fortifiers learn to have an arsenal of activities that they can choose from at any given moment.

Stay Centered

There is a type of meditation called *mindfulness*. It is the act of using focus and breathing to center yourself in the now. Just the act of deep, controlled breathing has been proven to promote relaxation, lower stress levels and release healthy doses of dopamine. If you are feeling scattered, this can be exactly what you need to get back on track. If you like the results you get and want to be a real zen master, you can find plenty of guided meditations on Youtube or sites like <http://marc.ucla.edu/>.

These three simple tools can make a big difference. They may seem too easy to truly make a difference but don't knock it 'til you try it. Each one can be a step out of the addiction cycle and keep you on the path to recovery.

3 WAYS TO HELP HEAL A PORN-SICK BRAIN

<http://blog.fortifyprogram.org/blog/2015/9/10/3-ways-to-help-heal-a-porn-sick-brain>

We get this sentiment expressed to us all the time:

I just feel broken and I don't know if there is any way to fix it.

This is a sad statement that most everyone can identify with, especially those who are struggling with an addiction. When dealing with pornography, it may seem to the addict that there is just no going back after the countless hours of putting that stuff into their brain.

We know pornography affects our mental and emotional health. But while porn addiction *does* do damage to our brains, it is not permanent. Think of it just as any other part of the human body—with time, it always heals. Sometimes it just needs a little help. Think of a broken arm or leg. While it is a nasty injury, all we need is time, patience, and of course a good doctor to put us in a cast.

Our understanding of how the brain works and the treatment of mental health is growing by day. In the past, things like addiction or depression have always been seen as personal weakness. The idea of, if you try harder you can just grit your teeth and get over it.

In today's society, we know that's just not how it works. Does that "white-knuckle" philosophy work with someone who just shattered their femur? Of course not. And we are learning that mental obstacles, like addiction, are just the same.

The fact is our brains *can* heal from the damage done by porn but they need a little help to get there. Just think of it like giving your body the time for bones to mend and scars to fade. Here are three tips to help this healing take place as smoothly as possible.

Grab Some Crutches

You can't put all of your weight on a sprained ankle, so you need something to keep you standing. Think of the old song, *we all need somebody to lean on*. Find some people that you can rely on and accept their support. Friends, family or anyone that will help get to where you need to be will be instrumental in your recovery. Accountability partners play the exact same role as a faithful set of crutches. They are there for you when you fall and will always help you get back up. Use these support systems when you're feeling hurt and you'll be back up and running in no time.

Take Your Medicine

Porn may have spent a long time going to work on your mind, and it's going to take some work to reverse the process. An addict's lifestyle is often constructed to support their habit, even if they don't consciously realize it. You need to drastically reformulate how you live your life so it supports your recovery, not your addiction. This is called self-care. It is basically having a concrete plan and a daily routine that keeps you on track. Keep to the schedule and you'll be on the path to full health. Deviate from it and you'll be back in a mental wheelchair in no time.

- Try some of these helpful meds:
- Get good sleep and wake up at a respectable time.
- Read a motivational quote to start your day.
- Try to eat healthier.
- Stay active.
- Stay social.

- Identify and avoid triggers.
- Lower social media usage and other unnecessary screen time.

All these forms of healthy self-medicating promote positive growth in your life. Veteran Fortifiers often sit down and schedule every minute of their day until they begin to build truly positive habits.

Strengthen Your Immune System

In this digital age, we will never fully be able to get out of pornography's reach, but that doesn't mean we shouldn't try to put up the biggest barrier possible. Work with the people closest to you to [establish internet protection](#) and lower access on all your devices. Remain accountable to them and stay honest. Admitting you have a problem is a big first step. Know your weaknesses and work on strengthening them. Know where your trouble areas are and avoid/eliminate them all together.

Put yourself in an environment where you have the space to heal and people who want to see back on your feet. The steps toward recovery aren't always easy, but they are totally worth feeling 100%.

HOW NOT WATCHING PORN WILL ALSO MAKE YOU LIVE LONGER

<http://blog.fortifyprogram.org/blog/2015/10/2/going-porn-free-will-also-make-you-live-longer>

Jane McGonigal is a game designer. She has spent her life studying what makes games good, interesting and even healthy. Through this research and some very traumatic life experience of her own, she has discovered some very simple principles that can help you live happier and longer.

The best part? She made it all into a game.

Watch the video: [The game that will give you 10 extra years of life](#)

The Game Of Life

McGonigal talks about the four ways we can improve our health and our lives: physically, emotionally, mentally, and socially. She calls them resistances, meaning if we are strong in each of these categories we will be resilient and be able to handle whatever life throws our way. In the Fortify Program, we refer to these things most commonly as connections.

An addiction focuses all of our energy on one unhealthy outlet, ignoring all others. We begin to connect with only one thing, which causes other important connections in our lives to dissolve. The most basic way to explaining recovery from addiction is not about abstinence but about rebuilding connections to the big beautiful world around us. This is the nature of the game Jane McGonigal describes, and really it is the point of the game of life. To live and be happy and connect.

Powering Up

Fortifiers often begin to do this naturally but McGonigal's analogy is perfect for implementing Battle Strategies into your recovery. She introduces a point system in her app, SuperBetter, that is a simple way to try to build positive and healthy connections every day.

Think of it like your life stats. Go for a jog? +1 physical connection. Call your grandma you haven't talked to in a while? +1 social connection.

If you incorporate one activity for each of these categories into your daily routine, you will be well on your way to solid recovery—and you'll actually have fun along the way. This is important because it builds variety in your life. Like we said earlier, addiction is when you become unhealthily focused on one unhealthy thing. You need to build all the positive aspects of your life to create an atmosphere of genuine recovery. Building longer and longer streaks of daily victories over your addiction will replace your addiction with a positive, joyful life.

COMBATting THE STRESS OF PORN ADDICTION

<http://blog.fortifyprogram.org/blog/2015/10/27/stress-and-porn-addiction>

Porn was our escape. A destructive and co-dependent escape, but an escape nonetheless. When hard times came into our lives, we would dodge them and go running for a fix rather than dealing with them head on. The release we felt from using porn would numb us to the bumps and bruises of life while simultaneously blinding us to the healthy joys of the world around us. In our quest to avoid pain, we closed ourselves off to happiness. But now things have changed. Recovery is breaking down the walls of isolation and addiction and we can start to feel the little things again. Warmth is returning to our minds and bodies. But sometimes those same old negative feelings creep back in.

As addicts we trained ourselves not deal with negativity. When pain, pressure, worry, discomfort, or boredom come into our lives, they cause stress. Stress is a huge trigger for most recovering addicts. However, like almost anything in recovery, you can turn it into a positive experience.

There are two things we need to know about the stress in our lives in order to harness it.

First, where does it come from, or what kind of stress is it?

Second, how are we responding to stress?

Let's start with the different kinds of stress.

Doing Too Little

This is probably the most common form of stress among addicts.

Usually when we think of stress in our lives we think it's because there is too much going on. However, people often feel the most stress because they are doing too little.

Think of this scenario: You know you have a test coming up that you need to study for but instead you binge watch something on Netflix. You then perform poorly on the test and now all of the sudden there is more pressure on future tests, you are concerned about failing the class and considering the impact that could have on your academic career.

When we aren't prioritizing our lives and taking care of our responsibilities, small things can tend to snowball until they feel out of control. Even when we try to brush them off they are still there waiting for us. Taking time to accomplish important tasks, or just getting some little things done, you will feel stress begin to ease up. Life will feel more manageable and you will feel stronger. Like the saying goes, don't sweat the small stuff and it's all small stuff.

Doing Too Much

Fortifiers can fall into this trap because they want to fix everything and they want to fix it all right now. We are so eager to be free from our addictions that sometimes we stuff our lives with anything and everything that will push porn out. Sometimes though, that can bring stress in.

We need to learn to walk before we run and dealing with these things can be new for us.

You are the only one who can really decide what needs to be changed in your life but just remember that there is no shame in being human. Biting off more than you can chew won't help you or anyone else.

Just Because Stress

Life happens, and there isn't too much to say about it. The only thing to remember is that not all stress has to do with your actions. Addicts can tend to take all negative feelings and combine them with a sense of blame but that is never helpful.

The most important thing about any of the three forms of stress is how you deal with it.

Healthy Response, Healthy Growth

Like we already said, stress is a trigger so treat it like one. Use the skills like STAR and Urge Surfing to move past your stress in the same way you would anything else.

If those aren't quite what you need here are a couple more tips:

- 1. Talk about It:** Calmly discussing your situation with someone can be a great way for you to put it in perspective. Even if you're talking to yourself... no joke. Try it.
- 2. Laugh it off:** Again. No joke. Laughing increases your oxygen supply and stimulates the production of endorphins. Endorphins make you feel happy!
- 3. Exercise:** Ok, we know, we talk about this in almost every article. But it's a big deal. 20-30 minutes of breaking a sweat just 3 times a week can lower stress.
- 4. Get real:** Learn from your strengths and weaknesses. Let go of the past and put your mistakes behind you.
- 5. Think positively:** Choose to adopt a good attitude. Don't think or say things that put yourself down. Find the silver lining and use it. A positive perspective can be the most crucial part at keeping stress at bay and empowering yourself.



THE 7 MENTAL TRAPS THAT PORN ADDICTS FALL INTO

<http://blog.fortifyprogram.org/blog/2015/11/19/the-7-mental-traps-that-porn-addicts-fall-into>

Have you ever wanted anything more than a porn-free life? For most Fortifiers, their desire to break free from their addiction has been as all-consuming as their addiction itself. Even when things get discouraging and we want to give up, that desire never truly fades. When we are actively pursuing our recovery, that hope tends to burn brighter and brighter. It is motivating and wonderful, and can keep us moving on the right path. However, if we aren't careful, our determination can send us charging recklessly off the tracks. Recovery is most effective when it is pensive, methodical, and consistent. Anyone who tries to fast forward their recovery is in for a rude awakening. It's all about balance. Keep moving forward while still remembering that recovery is a process.

As important as it is to support a positive outlook throughout your recovery, it is equally important to make sure you aren't falling into any mental traps. When dealing with addiction, [we end up combatting things like depression and anxiety](#). As a result, even if you're working really hard on creating a positive lifestyle, this backwards thinking won't get you very far at all. Here are some ways of thinking to be aware of and try to avoid.

All-or-nothing thinking – Looking at things in black-or-white categories, with no middle ground. *"If I have one setback, I'm a total failure."*

No porn is good porn. No setback is a good setback. But does watching porn or having a setback make you a bad person? NO! In recovery, there is no such thing as failure. Yes, we have missteps and mistakes, but there is never a "point-of-no-return." Failure is what happens a person is no longer trying. As long as you are still breathing, you can work on becoming the person you want to be. It is impossible to be a Fortifier and a failure at the same time.

Overgeneralization – Generalizing from a single negative experience, expecting it to hold true forever. *"I can't do anything right."*

This mentality can be disproved by a law of nature. First there is no such thing as an absolute. Nothing is always anything. There are exceptions to every rule. The idea that you can't do anything right or that you will always be a failure has been repeatedly disproved by you trying to quit. So stop ignoring the evidence! The most fundamental principle of nature is not permanence, it is change.

Diminishing the positive – Coming up with reasons why positive events don't count. *"She said she had a good time on our date, but I think she was just being nice."*

We can be prone to this way of thinking as a result of some of the insecurities our addiction has injected into our life. Remember, fighting for happiness is moot if you don't believe you deserve it. Don't let the annoying little voice in your head tell you otherwise. Try drowning it out, literally. If you find yourself diminishing the positive, try giving yourself a pep-talk, out loud. It's fun and it works. Try it.

The negative filter – Ignoring positive events and focusing on the negative instead. Noticing the one thing that went wrong, rather than all the things that went right. *"I didn't look at anything but I was close. Why am I so messed up?"*

Every victory counts. Don't disregard your progress because you aren't perfect yet. Enjoy the journey! If we aren't working on something, then we are just being bored and lazy. Take pride in the fact that you working on bettering yourself. Work on being a little bit better and give yourself licence to celebrate the little things.

Jumping to conclusions – Making negative interpretations without actual evidence. You act like a mind reader or a fortune teller. *"They must think I'm pathetic. I'll be stuck in this addiction forever."*

This comes into play a lot when dealing with other people, like our accountability partners or people who we care about what they think. We assume that they are going to judge us as harshly as we judge ourselves. Think about that for a second. How would you react to someone else in your situation? You'd obviously be sympathetic and understanding. Stop assuming that others are judging you and start believing they have your best interest in mind.

Emotional reasoning – Believing that the way you feel reflects reality. *"I constantly feel like such a loser, therefore I must be a loser."*

Just because we think or feel something, that does not make it true. Separating yourself from what goes on impulsively inside your head is a valuable skill and will be very helpful to your recovery. Try slowing down and taking time to react to your own experiences. It might sound cheesy but breathing and meditation can be a big help for this. Be curious about your feelings and challenge them, don't just blindly accept them. People who do this are more logical, rational, and better at making decisions.

Labeling – Self-identifying based on mistakes and perceived shortcomings *"I am a porn addict. I'm a loser, a failure, a weak person with no self-control."*

We say again; you are not your addiction. Who you are is not the same as where you are.

Moments of weakness don't define you. [You are not the result of some sad events or simply the victim of an addiction.](#) Yes, you have struggles; yes, you have weaknesses; but those things do not matter because you have the ability to be free. You just have to unlock it. Tap into your potential step by step, day by day, learning and growing.

Take the time to think about the mental traps on this list. They may not all apply to you but it is very probable that you are prone to at least one of these ways of thinking. Take these lessons and build them into your battle strategies and plans. Take things one day at a time and practice being self-aware and patient. When you work towards your recovery you can be aware of your own mental pitfalls and make even greater changes. Stay tuned in and you'll stay on the path to freedom.

10 EXCUSES THAT WILL KEEP YOU WATCHING PORN

<http://blog.fortifyprogram.org/blog/2015/10/6/10-excuses-that-keep-you-stuck-with-porn>

Addiction teaches us to rationalize and justify. Over time we get really good at making excuses for ourselves to act out and we keep buying into our own lies. There is no end to what a porn addict can come up with in the moment; we look for any and every reason to act out. Fortifiers need to do some serious soul-searching to find out what their biggest excuses are. We aren't telling you this to make you feel bad, we just hope that this list will help you identify some of the excuses that are holding you back.

Here are the top 10 excuses we hear most at Fortify HQ:

1. **This is the last time.** There will never be a last time as long as you keep telling yourself this. Accept that you have a problem and realize that recovery is a constant road of victories and setbacks. The sooner you realize that relying on your own strength (or "white-knuckling it" as well call it) won't work, the closer you are to real change.
2. **It could be worse.** A lot of things could be worse, but recovery is about what can be better. Focus on your potential, not your rock bottom. If we know anything about porn addiction, it's that it will get worse if we let it. Realize that what you're doing is harmful and commit to getting healthy.
3. **I'm not hurting anyone.** Your addiction is actually hurting a lot of people, including yourself. If you don't already know, studies have shown that pornography is directly tied to emotional and sexual dissatisfaction in relationships. Not to mention all of the emotional, mental and physical ramifications from addiction that you'll end up dealing with yourself. All the problems that porn creates make it so difficult, if not impossible, to freely give all of yourself to your loved ones.
4. **This type of porn isn't as bad.** This one can be subtle. A lot of the time we will let ourselves get close to things we know are triggers because they maybe aren't technically pornographic, or they are "just" softcore. Sometimes we just personalize the situation to convince ourselves that some kind of porn is okay for us, telling ourselves that we are lonely or even that we "deserve it." No porn is good or even okay. Stay away from the cliff's edge and you'll never be in danger of falling.
5. **I need the release. I'm so stressed/worried/upset/bored.** This is just the porn-addicted version of your brain talking, not your healthy one. Be smarter than your brain. We all need to vent at some point, so do it positively. Slipping back into harmful habits when times get tough is only going to make things tougher.
6. **Everybody does it and they're fine. It's a natural release.** Maybe other people watch porn and live well... but can you? If you're reading this and you're enlisted in the Fortify Program, odds are you can't. Don't compare yourself to other people. This is your life and your recovery. You know that there's nothing healthy about your urges to watch porn and using this justification will throw you back into the endless addiction cycle.
7. **I'm already screwed up, why stop now?** Remember: YOU ARE NOT YOUR ADDICTION. This is one of the most important things you need to remind yourself, day in and day out. You're not a bad person because you struggle with this, you're a great person because you're doing something to change for the better.

8. **I had a setback so I might as well take advantage of it and binge.** This one is a huge culprit for turning a moment of weakness into a massive setback in your recovery. Learning to dust yourself off and turn things around quickly is an immensely important skill for Fortifiers. Remember that setbacks are a part of recovery and that they are motivation to press on, not permission to dig yourself deeper.
9. **I need it to fall asleep.** Addiction can build seemingly normal routines into our lives that can be really hard to break. Sometimes our triggers are based on a time of day, a location, or even something as simple as a sound. It might sound crazy but there are things in our lives that inadvertently become related to our addiction. These types of triggers are powerful and can easily turn into part of our daily routines. Recognize the difference between a normal, healthy routine and one that your addiction has created.
10. **I can't stop making excuses.** Look around at your life to find the excuses you are using. Make a list and keep it with you. When one of these rationalizations creeps into your thoughts, you will be able to recognize and dismiss it. And remember, thinking of these things doesn't make you perverted or bad. In fact, as we start to sift through thoughts and rely on the ones that support our recovery, we will find more trust and confidence in ourselves.

THE DANGEROUS ROAD OF RATIONALIZATION

<http://blog.fortifyprogram.org/blog/2015/9/10/the-dangerous-road-of-rationalization>

We humans love to rationalize, and we do it constantly.

I'll just have one more piece.

I should stop watching... but Netflix already started playing the next episode.

Or the timeless classic:

You only live once!

The problem is these are all just ways of coping. These are little lies we tell ourselves so we can justify doing things we know we shouldn't. Rationalization can be a harmless walk by the fridge at midnight to get leftover cake before anyone else or it can be our way of cheating ourselves out of progression and reaching our goals.

But there is another side to this coin.

What about being rational? What about making well-informed, educated decisions based off of life experience and logic?

There is actually a big difference between making rational decisions and rationalizing. In the context of porn addiction, it is crucial that we stop rationalizing and start choosing real recovery.

As an addict, you probably often feel like two people: the driven Fortifier, dedicated to self-improvement and healing, or the self-gratifying narcissist only concerned with avoiding pain and catching the next high. It's an old story, one that is very similar to the famous story of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*.

We all have a Jekyll and a Hyde so to speak, the trick is knowing who is in charge and which one to listen to.

Recognizing the Beast

In the many retellings of the classic story, Mr. Hyde is a monstrous, hulking terror. Fortunately, you won't grow ten feet or sprout claws every time you have an urge to act out. But it isn't always easy to identify which internal voice is talking.

Our "Mr. Hyde" uses a lot of different tricks to try to convince us to give in and watch porn. These include minimizing, justifying, comparing, and other harmful mind tricks we play on ourselves. However persuasive we may be to our inner selves, these things only do one thing: keep us trapped in our addiction. In order to see through all of the tricks we need to be completely honest. Just because your addiction makes you feel like two people, doesn't mean you can't choose who to be.

Reading Warning Signs

There may be times when a tough situation sneaks up on you. You're innocently browsing social media and an account you follow has reposted something that triggers you. Or there is a billboard at the mall that really distracts you. Surviving these times calls for the [STAR Method](#). You need to take a step back and think about what you really want.

The problem with rationalizing is that it usually starts a while before the actual act of using. A lot of Fortifiers have goals and rules about when and where they use their electronic devices. For example, most do not bring computers, laptops or tablets into their bedrooms. But this situation can be easily rationalized and put you in danger. Example:

My family is being so loud out in the kitchen and I need some quiet to study. I'm going to take my laptop into my bedroom or I'll never get anything done.

This rationalization has nothing to do with porn and in a lot of ways feels totally innocent. But we need to be brutally honest with ourselves if we hope to gain real ground in our recovery.

Turning Weakness to Strength

If we look at that same situation again we can see how a rational response sets us on a safe path and empowers us to success. Instead of rationalizing one might say:

I'm having a hard time studying right now but I shouldn't take my laptop into my bedroom. I've had plenty of setbacks in the past that way and it's not worth the risk. If I'm being honest, just thinking about having privacy and access to a computer is already making me think about porn. I'll figure something else out so I can study. Besides, I set the goal to not use devices in my bedroom and I want to stick to that.

Responding with clarity and direction in times where we could have easily taken the path of least resistance will strengthen you in so many ways. Every time we learn to inch toward our goals, we will find strength, vision and meaningful reward.

C.S. Lewis said:

Every time you make a choice, you are turning the core, central part of you into something a little different from what it was before. All of our lives, across many choices, we are slowly turning this central thing into one kind of person or another.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN WILLPOWER VS. SKILLPOWER

<http://blog.fortifyprogram.org/blog/2015/11/24/the-difference-between-willpower-vs-skillpower>

We addicts talk about willpower a lot. We often praise the attribute and talk about how much willpower we need in our recovery. However, there is just one problem with the idea of willpower: most people see it as a character trait that you either have or don't have. For an addict, this can be a pretty harsh perspective. We know that we have proved time and time again in our lives that we have little to no willpower. But that doesn't define you, and it's not something permanent. We want to help you shift that perspective and to do so, we're going to tell you about developing skillpower instead.

Baby Steps

Think back, like way back. Can you remember taking your first steps? Probably not but you still know they happened. At one point in your life, you could not walk. No matter how badly your baby self wanted to, you just weren't capable of making that happen for a while. Would more or better willpower have helped your diaper-clad self? Of course not. It would be totally unfair to accuse a baby of laziness. If a baby wanted to badly enough, could it up and run a marathon? of course not. What mattered in your journey as a blooming bi-ped was practice, falling and getting back up, which is very comparable to your life today.

The Lies We Tell Ourselves

Sometimes, for some strange reason, we convince ourselves that we cannot do something. For example, a kid might receive a failing grade on a spelling test and declare to themselves and the world: "I can't spell." We do this all the time. We use examples of personal failure to prove that we are incapable of a certain kind of success. Then we make matters worse by convincing ourselves that if we had better willpower, we could flex our mighty character and overcome the obstacles before us. If we believe that, then we end up believing that we are defined by our shortcomings and convincing ourselves that we are personally flawed on a level that we apparently have no control over. Not exactly the most productive outlook. Sure, maybe you aren't good at something, but that only means you aren't good at it yet.

Strong-Will and Highly Skilled

Change is the first law of nature. From the very first day we made the decision to overcome our addiction, we became agents of change. And our level of willpower can change as well. Like a muscle we can flex, willpower can be developed and strengthened. That is why we prefer to call it *skillpower*. A skill is never concrete, it is something that is developed. Sure, there are people who are naturally gifted, and maybe they get a headstart, but you are the one who is going to get yourself across the finish line. When considering our own willpower and our adversities in addiction, we must always remember that it is a process. We have to remember that our will is tied to our consistency, not the outward outcome of our actions. If we walk into a gym for the first time in our lives and try to lift the heaviest weight there, are we doing ourselves any favors? Nope. Understand that you have limitations. You are on a certain level in your journey and that is fine. If you practice and are patient, you can develop the skills you need to grow. It takes time but it is a process that leads to real results. When it comes to your recovery, trying to jump ahead only increases the chance of you hurting yourself mentally.

This is Not an Excuse

Understanding that you need to start slow and be consistent doesn't mean using porn here and there until you get a bit stronger. It means knowing what you need to help you along the way. This is where accountability partners, web-filtration software, social media restrictions, and counseling (to name a few) could all come into play. Understanding that we can't just will ourselves into a porn-free life means finding other ways to support yourself until you get stronger. Remember that recovery is a marathon, not a sprint. We are prone to wanting things in high-speed, but recovery doesn't work that way. Just like healthy diet and regular exercise are the only real ways to lose weight, recovery from addiction takes sobriety and consistent life changes.

URGES

<http://blog.fortifyprogram.org/blog/2015/9/10/j9teqnd5cp1ghh9f7e47ve39mspwl>

Let's talk about urges.

I mean, that's where everything starts, right? You can be going throughout your day with no issues but the instant that pesky urge hits, that's when the real battle begins.

Urge

/erj/

noun

1. a strong impulse or desire.

synonyms: need, compulsion, longing, yearning, hankering, craving, hunger, thirst

Now, if you think about it, you're not necessarily fighting against porn, you're fighting against the urge to watch it. If you can learn to more skillfully work with your urges to look at porn, you will have a handle on your whole recovery. It's all a matter of recognizing your urges and then doing what it takes to outlast them without having a setback.

One of the most important things to remember when overcoming your urges is that they WILL go away.

Most people generally believe that an urge will increase in intensity until you give into it. Isn't that how we usually think? That an urge is this infinite thing that will keep going upward and upward as time goes on and won't stop until we indulge the urge?

Wrong.

In reality, an urge is less like a forever rising spaceship and more like a wave in the ocean; it swells to a peak and then subsides. In other words, urges and cravings - no matter how strong - will eventually go away if you just wait them out.

This is always the case.

Not just sometimes - always.

That being said, it won't always be easy. Some urges will be stronger than others and will feel like they will never go away. But trust us, if you face the urge head on, they will always pass.

Some people call this "urge surfing".

Surf's up, bro!

And just like a big wave surfer, it takes strength and courage to stand and face an urge.

So instead of trying to run from an urge or worse, give in to it, do this: stay present, step back, and watch it. Instead of trying to replace the urge, stand up to it and let it pass. Stay conscious and recognize the emotions you're feeling. Notice the urge grow to its full strength and just watch it.

Like a hunter in the forest or a scientist observing an experiment, patiently wait for the urge to dissipate and fade away. It'll be hard for a minute, but like a wave, it'll break, wash onto the shore, and then recess back into the ocean where it came from.

It may take a while to master this technique, but we promise, once you do, you'll be a world champion "urge surfer".

Party on, dude.

RESISTING URGES: THE STAR METHOD

<http://blog.fortifyprogram.org/blog/2015/9/10/resisting-urges-the-star-method>

Everyone wants a quick solution to their problems. Whenever a problem arises, we think to ourselves, how do I fix it and how do I fix it *right now*?! We often desperately wish that we can change our lives in an instant and permanently be shiny and new. Unfortunately there is no way to just skip to the end and be successful.

When it comes to dealing with addiction, this is especially true. With addiction, there is no golden ticket, no fast forward button and no miracle pill.

(If we find one of these things we will definitely let you know.)

But for now there is one surefire place to start:

Just breathe.

Words to live by. This simple task can be an effective solution for those difficult urges to look at porn. In the Fortify Program, we developed a great method that contains this little piece of wisdom and has shown to be super effective when dealing with those pesky urges. There's a little more to it than just breathing, but it works.

It's called the STAR method.

Addict or not, there will be plenty of times in life where everything is just too much. It's too hard, too stressful, too painful, too tempting, too easy. These are times in your life when you are prone to acting in a way you are not going to like when you look back. STAR can help teach you how to gain control, direction, and vision.

Step 1: Step Back and Observe

Let's be real, in times when we are losing our grip we are usually not thinking straight. It will make a world of difference if you just take a second and find your footing. Granted, this is easier said than done. Urges can make us feel desperate and frantic. But when our brain kicks into high gear, we need to put the breaks on and look at what is happening. You might not be able to catch yourself right away, but with practice you'll start to see triggers and stresses coming. Eventually, you'll be ready and waiting to shut down these urges before they even become an issue. You'll see things for what they really are and start to be able to cut through denial.

Remember, an successful Fortifier knows how to wait a second and think about what's happening.

Step 2: Take a Few Conscious Breaths

Don't roll your eyes at this one, there is legit science behind it. Give your brain what it needs to do its job and give it a good dose of oxygen. Your muscles will be able to relax a bit and you will feel more grounded. Some people find it advantageous to examine how their breath physically feels; literally feeling the actual sensation of just breathing. Close your eyes and feel your lungs fill up slowly. You are no longer frantic, you are in control and you are ready for the next step.

Step 3: Ask Yourself What You Really Want

This is crucial and requires something we aren't always great at as humans: honesty. If you have some long term goals in place, they can be a big help here. (*Hint, hint: go make some goals.*) Think

about what you want for your life, for the people you love, and who you want to be as person. Rely on your core values and reject the part of yourself that is craving instant gratification. Set your sights on the future and orient yourself toward that vision.

After going through these first three steps, you're now ready to make a decision.

Step 4: Respond in a Healthy Way

You've stepped back from the situation, you put yourself in control and what happens next is completely your choice. The choice was always yours to make, but now you have a chance of doing this thing right. That isn't up to us or anyone else, it's up to you. We are rooting for you.

To help put you in the right direction, here are some tips: look around and find something to do. It can be anything, but it is more powerful if it's something that is active. A few good examples we've heard from successful Fortifiers are; exercise, hobbies, talking to someone (including yourself), or just even getting outside for a minute. On the flip side, we would suggest you stay away from doing things that can make you feel worse or even fuel the addiction, like eating junk food or watching too much TV or playing too many video games. These things might just put you back in a weak spot. The key to this step is changing things up and giving yourself the chance to think clearly.

And don't forget the main rule of the STAR Method:

If at first you don't succeed, try, try again.

You might not master STAR right away and have a setback. Don't beat yourself up too much, just be sure to use it next time. Maybe you do it successfully and the urge comes back ten minutes later. Stay strong. Take it from us, STAR works and it can work every time, even if you have to use it every ten minutes until you win the battle.

We all know there are good days and bad days but it is what we do on those days that matters. Remember:

Step Back

Take a Breath

Ask

Respond

That's it, you now have some very powerful ammunition the next time you feel like you're on shaky ground. The STAR method can be applied to anything and anyone. addict or not.

When you become a master of the STAR method you'll be able to enjoy increased self-control, motivation, confidence, level headedness, feeling more like yourself, and being totally chilled out.

Sounds good.

WEB PROTECTION: FORTIFYING YOUR WORLD

<http://blog.fortifyprogram.org/blog/2015/9/10/web-protection-fortifying-your-world>

Porn is everywhere. The media has been sexualized and porn is normalized in our day-to-day lives but also just in the simple fact that we are all walking around with instant internet access in our pocket. This is a really big deal for addicts and one of the main reasons that porn is such a powerful vice: accessibility. All it takes is a single click.

So what can you do? How can we possibly stay afloat?

Well, there are a few ways. Some can be costly, others not. The important thing is to try and find a method of protection/filtration that fits your needs and aids your recovery. Here is a quick list of tips, tricks, and products to help you fortify (*see what we did there?*) your life.

Home Network Protection

As far as filtration services go, there are basically two options: application based and router based. Let's talk about network routers.

The router is that little box in your house that makes the internet happen. Some companies have created routers that are programmed to filter all of the internet in your house. This is a blanket strategy, every device connected to the network will be covered and admins will have access to viewing records so there is an element of accountability. And you just plug in the hardware and go. They usually require minimal setup and update automatically so you are always on top of web protection. This method can be very effective but it does have a specific flaw: it is localized. You obviously can't take your home network with you so any devices that have data enabled on them or can access wi-fi outside the house won't be protected.

Our recommendation for network based protection is a system called [Routerlimits](#). Their service is effective and relatively inexpensive. There is a cost associated with using this so Fortifiers should talk to their families or accountability partners to see if this is truly the best option.

We should also mention a service called [OpenDNS](#). This is a cloud-based system that does almost the same thing as a programmed router. By logging on and creating a system, you create a proxy IP address that will filter web use. It has similar pros and cons to a router but there is a free option. Our only disclaimer is the not-so-tech-savvy may find it a little confusing.

Take It With You

Aside from protecting the network, the other most common strategy is a device-based solution. Using a downloadable program that can filter multiple browsers and record history. The holes in this plan is that there are some devices that won't be covered, such as gaming systems. There usually isn't a downloadable option for these devices but you can still check if they have settings that can restrict browser and internet use.

[NetNanny](#) is a great, comprehensive service. You can protect multiple devices depending on the option you choose and there is a safe-browser mode for smartphones. There is a subscription fee involved in this solution as well so, again, discuss with your family and accountability partner.

If price is a big deal for you, check out [K9](#) or [Mobicip](#). Both have free options and safe-browsers for iOS and Android devices.

Accountability

Some of you may be at the stage where you are less concerned with filtration but would like to have an accountability system in place that keeps you honest. Some of the blocking software we talked about above has these monitoring options but there are others that are built specifically just for accountability. [Covenant Eyes](#) and [Teen Safe](#) are systems that allow a third-party to see what is happening on different computers and devices. This strategy is great for Fortifiers because it promotes trust and communication. You will have to rely on your accountability partners and understand that they will see what you are doing. If you are at a point in your recovery where you trust yourself enough to be accountable instead of filtered, we recommend this philosophy.

Another company to watch out for is [Pyur](#), the world's first smart filter. They combine both network and application-based protection and have one of the most innovative filtration systems out there. They have not yet released their service but you can sign up for early-access on their site. They are currently expecting products to ship by the end of 2015.

Quick Tips

- Whenever you set up a filtration system, you want to make sure you don't have an easy way around it. For example: if you decide to use a safe-browser on your mobile device, make sure you delete other browsers like Safari or Chrome. After doing this, change the settings with your accountability partner to restrict downloading new apps without their passcode.
- Watch out for dating and social media apps. Go through your devices and eliminate any apps you think could be triggers. Twitter and Instagram can be big ones if you're not careful.
- As we mentioned earlier, most gaming devices have internet access now. However, because many who own these consoles are kids, they often have built-in restriction settings. Talk to your family/accountability partner and make sure these gaming devices are protected for you.

Remember The Bigger Picture

A really important thing to remember is that web-restriction is not recovery. It is a band-aid on the issue. It can be very helpful and important tool but it is not the same thing as learning to resist urges and build strong connections in your life. Many people use filtration software because it allows them to slow down and get sober. Using web-protection may be a big step for you, but it should just be another weapon in your arsenal of all the other things you are doing to fortify your life.

Remember, recovery is about true change, not just stopping.

THE PORN-FREE DIET

<https://fortifyprogram.squarespace.com/config?frameUrl=/blog/2015/10/30/the-porn-free-diet>

So many things in our lives can either contribute to our addictions or our recovery, but not all of them are obvious or direct. The biggest factor when it comes to successful recovery is doing the little things when it comes to your health, specifically diet, sleep, and exercise. Depending on the lifestyles choices we make, these little things can either supercharge our recovery or drag us down.

We are what we eat

Our diet is probably the most difficult to identify and change because we don't always feel the immediate effects of the food we eat. Unlike exercise where you feel endorphins as soon as you finish, or feeling terrible as soon as you wake up because you stayed up all night long, the effects of a diet aren't always readily apparent. Think about it, you don't gain weight after eating one donut. It is a gradual process. This is exactly why diet is so important. Not only does our body's reaction to certain foods mirror our reaction to porn (dopamine release, cravings, etc.) but a good diet is all about [consistency, habit, and self-control](#), three things that definitely apply to recovery.

Here are some of the do's and don'ts of food that can help your on your way to building a positive porn-free life.

Sugar

Here's the science: sugary foods have repeatedly been shown to trigger the reward centers in our brain. This process is closely related to dopamine release, which means sugar can actually become a trigger. Humans have evolved to respond to sugar for survival. Quick and easy energy stores were hard to come by when we lived in caves, but now, high-fructose corn syrup gives us instant satisfaction. While this isn't ideal for our health, waiting around a few thousand years for our genetic code to re-write itself is probably a bad plan. So just like in recovery, self-control is key. Too much sugar messes up our energy levels, libido, and our ability to get rid of toxins. In some cases it has also been linked to the same emotional and mental issues like anxiety and depression. Sound familiar?

Consistency is key

Don't skip meals and don't binge. This disorganized habit messes up your metabolism and make it harder for your body to properly use what you give it. Health reasons aside, inconsistent eating patterns usually go hand-in-hand with a lifestyle that is messy and out of control. For example, sleeping late instead of getting up in time to eat breakfast is a small example of letting things happen to you instead of you making things happen. Self-control is huge in recovery and eating at regular times is a great way to practice that.

Avoiding binging is huge as well. How often have you held off watching porn for while [just to fall back into and go overboard](#)? With food, binging is just as unhealthy. Eat small healthy snacks throughout the day and be sure to have three nutritious regular meals. Grab an apple for after breakfast and a granola bar for between lunch and dinner. Consistency and self-control are the foundation to a healthy diet and overall lifestyle.

You're also what you drink

This is sort of an extension of the principles we discussed when dealing with sugar but drinks deserve their own category because there is so much to watch out for. Our bodies digest liquids much easier than solids, which means we can be more affected by their contents. On top of this, so many different types of drinks are unbelievably unhealthy. Alcoholic beverages, energy drinks, anything high in caffeine or caffeine substitutes, sodas (even “diet” drinks, still bad) and most juices from concentrate are the top culprits. All of these drinks are notorious for sugar content, and not having much nutritional value. Instead of going through every ingredient that we can’t even pronounce, try this instead: drink water. Water is how our body gets rid of what we don’t need and replenishes our hydration stores. If we are drinking liquids full of sugar and who knows what else, we will feel the effects. Water may not be the most exciting choice, but trust us, once you get in the habit, you’ll feel refreshed with every glass of H2O.

Eat like a human

If you’re reading this and getting totally stoked for a health overhaul that consists of eating only kale and protein powder, please stop. Diet fads can often be as unhealthy as they are healthy. For example, everyone hates on carbs, but good carbs are necessary to sustain proper hormone development in your body. Hormones are also totally thrown off by something else: frequent porn viewing. Your hormones not only control your sexual health but also things like your hair and skin health, muscle development, bone density and energy levels. Basically, just eat food that can contribute to a balanced life. Include all the food groups and broaden your dietary horizons. You should also try to eat food that actually has to be prepared, whether that be a couple eggs in the morning or even a small pizza that doesn’t come in a box. This is the easiest way to avoid always eating high-sugar, high-starch and processed foods. The second benefit is that you now have one more healthy activity in your life instead of porn. Cooking your own food is productive in more ways than one. It’s all about being informed and being in balance. Take care of your body and your brain will thank you.

MENTAL FALLOUT: DEALING WITH DEPRESSION AFTER PORN USE

<http://blog.fortifyprogram.org/blog/2015/11/13/mental-fallout-dealing-with-depression-after-porn-use>

Numb All Over

Why is this happening? Things are going good. I'm doing better. I'm more focused and motivated, school is finally manageable again, I feel calm around my friends and my family. I know this is working... but I still just feel empty. I should be ecstatic about all the changes I'm making, and sometimes I am, but just for a moment. It's like I'm numb all over.

Does this sound at all familiar?

We can get caught up in an addiction for many reasons but at some point it becomes about escaping. We stop trying, working, or worrying. When negativity and stress come our way we try to sweep it aside with the wave of pleasure that come from porn use.

Three things come as a result of this constant venting of our feelings and problems. First, we stop learning how to deal with anything that puts pressure on us, even if it's good pressure. Second, we don't just numb out the bad but we numb out the good. We are so used to the huge flood of chemicals in our brains from porn that anything normal that should make us feel great, just feels like another small drop in the bucket. Third, because the simple pleasures in life no longer cut it, our brains and bodies freak out. This is known as withdrawal. This lovely combination of emotional and mental fallout from porn addiction is usually manifested in things like depression and anxiety.

Depression/Anxiety

When it comes to porn addiction, the first thing to remember about depression and anxiety is that they are symptoms of a bigger issue. That isn't to say that these imbalances aren't a very real issue for tons of Fortifiers. We know that a lot of people struggle. But the surest solution is in recovery. The problem with depression and other negative feelings is that they can be a double edged sword. When we mess up, they drag us down even further and can lead us to wallow in our mistakes. Then, even when we are doing well, they linger and keep us from getting back up. There is a silver lining though. A lot of the same strategies you are learning as a Fortifier can be applied to dealing with depression and anxiety.

Step by Step

It is important to start small when approaching these feelings. Remember to be very patient with yourself. We know how much you want to get into the problem and just fix it. The trick is that no matter what, depression isn't going anywhere overnight; it is something fades away gradually. You have to be ready to live your life so that every day and every choice moves you one step closer to being and feeling better. When that fog settles into our lives, we can't let ourselves get lost. You need to move in the right direction to find your way out. But how do you do that? And where do you start? A lot of these tips will sound familiar if you know anything about the Fortify program but they are really important.

- Regular Exercise (30 mins of intense movement at least 3 times a week.)

- Regular sleep patterns (8 hours of sleep and going to bed around the same time every night.)
- Getting more sun. (Vitamin D is your friend.)
- Practicing relaxation and meditation.
- [Healthy eating habits.](#)
- Taking care of a pet.

The trick with these activities is that they help activate dopamine, but more importantly they also activate oxytocin. Both of these compounds are linked to how happy we feel. Dopamine provides a rush that is more fleeting, while oxytocin is referred to as the “bonding” chemical. The reason it is called this is because one of the most critical ways to increase oxytocin levels is quality time with important people. Healthy, positive and supportive relationships are critical when dealing with extreme emotions and it comes down to the difference between these two chemicals.

Think of dopamine as sugar: it tastes good, we get quick energy, but too much will throw us off and we can crash. Oxytocin is like protein: our bodies use it more slowly but it is directly related to our physical growth and long term energy. After being involved with porn for too long, our dopamine levels are totally out of whack. We need some now and then but too much can be a problem and it won't sustain us. What we need is oxytocin and the best way to get it is to build our connections with family and friends.

Other positive activities should be done in moderation, and should also be challenging in some sense. The reward from something we have worked towards with consistency is much more likely to trigger oxytocin.

Let Go

“Jealous is the night when the morning comes.”

Depression can give us a pretty twisted view of the world and especially of ourselves. Sometimes we don't even notice what we are doing because we are so used to approaching situations in a negative light. You Fortifiers already know that will-power or “positive thinking” won't cut it. You need a plan.

Take a step in someone else's shoes. Ask yourself if you would see yourself this way if you were looking from the perspective of another person. Don't let your secrets stand in the way. This is when having an accountability partner who you've honestly shared your struggles with comes in handy!

Cut yourself some slack. Many depressed people are perfectionists, holding themselves to impossibly high standards and then beating themselves up when they fail to meet them. Battle this source of self-imposed stress by challenging your negative ways of thinking.

Save problems for later. If you're having a very negative thought or experience, don't try and tackle it if you aren't in a good mood. Jot it down somewhere and then go do something fun. When you're feeling better come back to it and think about the situation in a new light. You'll be surprised how much things change when you look at them with fresh eyes.

Like we said earlier, you have to be in this for the long haul. Don't give up and try not to get discouraged. It may be hard now but there are better days ahead if you stick with Fortify and your recovery. We promise.

THE ART OF FALLING: LEARNING HOW TO DEAL WITH RELAPSES

<http://blog.fortifyprogram.org/blog/2015/9/10/the-art-of-falling-learning-how-to-deal-with-relapses>

Raise your hand if this sounds familiar:

Never again. Never, ever, ever, ever again. That was the last time. From now on I will be different. I'll be the person I want to be. I will be in control and make good choices. I'm really going to do it this time. This is the first day of the rest of my life!

Then a short while later you mess up.

Again.

Maybe you made it a little longer this time, or maybe your pledge to your recovery was still echoing in your head when you fell back into old habits. Regardless, you made a promise and you broke it. You feel that all you are left with now is more evidence of your inadequacy.

Right?

WRONG!

The sooner you accept that there is no end to our making mistakes, the happier you will be. Remember, there is no such thing as a last straw. Pornography does not own us or govern our lives. We *always* have the ability to make a difference in our own lives.

Don't believe it? Well, here's a handy metaphor to help us explain what we mean.

Climb The Mountain.

The sport of rock climbing is based very loosely on two basic principles: going up and falling down. You actually have to be good at both in order to be a successful climber. There are a few different ways to rock climb but the form we want to talk about is called "Lead Climbing". This is when the climber brings the rope up with them as they move upward. As the climber gets higher and higher up the wall they will clip in with anchors to protect themselves from falling very far and becoming very dead. Guess what? Much more often than not, they still fall.

Recovery can be the same. Instead of looking at falling as an inevitable loose rock or an unsteady foothold, it can actually be a chance to get your bearings and make real progress. Like a rock climber, Fortifiers need to use the tools at their disposal and gear up for the challenge ahead. If they do it right they have a much better chance of reaching the summit and taking fewer, shorter falls along the way.

Beware Of Binging

A lot of people will want to give up after they fall. They think, *it's too hard, I'm too tired, I can't do this*. The problem is if you give in and let yourself turn one bad day into a bad week, it can be the difference of falling 100 feet instead of just a momentary slip.

Avoid this by trying to find a healthy and positive outlook. This is a lot easier said than done but don't beat yourself up. But also don't just brush it off and ignore it. Humbly accept the fact that you made a mistake and decide what you are going to do about it in the future. As soon as you

realize that you've messed up, choose immediately the next moment to recalibrate. That will set you back in the right direction and you will be able to continue your climb.

Stop And Look Around

Falling can be discouraging for any climber (or Fortifier). It is easy to feel defeated and tired. Instead of wallowing, you owe it to yourself to analyze the situation. You fell for a reason so look at what just happened and identify it. Maybe it was stress or a trigger or boredom. Did you let your guard down or stop doing one of your battle strategies? Whatever the case, once you identify the problem and mark it down in your Battle Tracker, you can find a way around it. Make a new plan and go from there. Just like a climber working out a new route after a fall, you can use a setback to map out your life and recover more effectively.

Ground Yourself

From using the Battle Tracker to exercising the [STAR method](#), one of the most important parts of your recovery in [The Fortify Program](#) is almost always your relationship with your accountability partner. And guess what? This relationship actually relates back to rock climbing as well.

Rock climbing has someone called the "Belay". This person stands on the ground and acts as a safety weight for the climber. If the climber falls, the belay is tied into the rope so that they will stop the climber's fall. Without a belay, rock climbing goes from fun outdoor recreation to ridiculously dangerous. Your accountability partner can be the same for you and more.

It can feel heart wrenching to go to your accountability partner after a setback but it can also be what keeps you from slipping further and free falling uncontrollably.

Learning how to deal with setbacks is one of the most important parts of any recovery because there is a really high chance you will experience lots of stumbles and slips along the way. An experienced Fortifier knows how to fall just as well as they know how to climb. By keeping a clear head, not giving in to despair, and keeping your help close, you can turn your setbacks into mountain top victories.

4 TRIGGERS THAT ARE SLIPPING UNDER YOUR RADAR

<http://blog.fortifyprogram.org/blog/2015/9/10/4-triggers-that-are-slipping-under-your-radar>

Fortifiers need to always be on the lookout because porn is everywhere. Like the alcoholic who won't even eat rum cake, we need to know our weaknesses, no matter how small. Recognizing the enemy is a very important and ongoing part of recovery. Becoming aware of the reality of your addiction is the first step to constantly arming yourself against triggers. While our addictions and our weaknesses don't define us, we can't let them consume us either.

Take an inventory of your life and look at what needs to change. Some things might be obvious and can take place right away. Others you might have to do some soul searching for. Frequently revisit the question of how you can shape your life to support your recovery. Revisit Battle Strategies, your Battle Tracker and all of your responses from the Fortify Program to identify weak spots and strengthen them.

As for today, here is a quick and easy checklist to run through and see if you are doing everything you can to set yourself up for a porn-free life. Take an honest mental inventory and apply each category to your own personal life.

1. Social Media

Not all online porn comes straight from the big bad porn industry. Lots of people actively support and distribute pornographic content. Some sites are worse than others but there is some level of triggering content on almost any site with a search bar, and that includes social media. Limiting your time on these apps can be a really helpful. It is usually when we get bored or restless that the urges inevitably start growing. Try setting daily limits or going on social media diets where you try to browse less time than you normally would. Not only is this going to reduce the chance of being exposed to something, but it will be great practice in building a healthy lifestyle.

2. Dating Apps

Kind of like social media but with a more personal purpose, dating apps are now a legitimate way of meeting people. They can be fun and helpful but they can also be very dangerous for triggers. Many of apps are marketed in very sexual ways and are used as nothing more than quick hook-ups or sexting. Also, remember that even the idea behind dating apps can be a trigger. If you're not careful, you can find yourself using dating apps to reduce a person down to a couple of photos and a short bio, leaving nothing more than a little online blip to make superficial judgements about. Not exactly the best way for us to practice getting to know people and stop objectifying. Try to keep your relationships to the real world and learn how to appreciate people for who they are, not how they come across online.

3. Stuff That "Isn't That Bad"

You know the stuff we're talking about here: shows, movies or games that feature content that isn't necessarily pornographic but is just the right amount of suggestive. We get that these things can be really entertaining, but you need to ask yourself, is it worth it? Don't jeopardize your recovery for something as common as a trashy reality TV show or rated M video game. Basically, just be honest with yourself. Some people will have personal triggers that have nothing to do with explicit content. For example, here's a recent message we got from a Fortifier:

I used to justify looking at porn by saying if it wasn't real people it was ok, so I would search for drawn or animated stuff. This lead me to find things that featured characters from my favorite shows and games. Now, those games are huge triggers for me. It sucks but I have to stay away from them now.

-Ryan, 25

4. Those Pesky Urges

The biggest trigger you will need to learn to overcome is yourself. Porn is everywhere and there are always going to be triggers that cause urges that could cause you to relapse. While avoiding them is key, the best thing you can do is train yourself to recognize these triggers and keep moving past them. Right now, your brain is programmed to seek things out. So when something flashes in front of your eyes the natural response is to chase it down. But following an urge down that rabbit hole can go a lot deeper than you thought. The white rabbit might be enticing but it leads to no wonderland at all. [Don't rationalize!](#) Learn to step back from those moments and see things for what they really are.

GIRL POWER > PORN: FEMALE FORTIFIERS ARE MAKING BIG CHANGES

<http://blog.fortifyprogram.org/blog/2015/9/10/girl-power-porn-female-fortifiers-are-making-big-changes>

Meet Cara.

She's a 19 year old college sophomore who, like many of you, is fighting the good fight against pornography addiction. She is living proof that girls are not only just as affected by porn as guys but they are amazing fighters. We had a quick Q&A with Cara about her journey through recovery, take a look at what she has to say.

When and where did you first see pornography?

I first saw pornography when I was in seventh grade. At that time, I was constantly being bullied by a group of boys that I went to school with. They were very rough with me; almost every day I would be shoved into lockers, walls, or other people. I was called names and made fun of about my physical appearance and my shyness. Not only did they physically and verbally abuse me, but I was sexually harassed as well. The boys would walk by me and grab my butt or my chest, corner me and try to touch me, or put my personal things (ie. erasers, books) down their pants and make me take them back. They would ask me to do inappropriate things to them and use foul language, but being a very naïve girl, I didn't understand much what they were talking about. This just made the make fun of even more, so one day I just got fed up I guess. I came home from school and went straight to the computer to look up something they had asked me to do to them. A video came up, and I clicked play, not knowing how it would affect me in the future. Honestly, I don't think that I even realized that I was watching porn until after I had watched the video several times.

At that time did you have any idea how it could affect your life?

I grew up going to church so the harmful effects of pornography were mentioned on occasion. But whenever it was talked about it was always directed specifically towards the boys, so I never put much thought into how it could affect me, because porn was "just a guy thing". I really didn't think that women struggled with pornography because it was never talked about! I thought that it was a really big deal for me to be watching porn just because I'm a girl, but it was a big deal because it was affecting who I was and how I viewed intimacy.

How did porn begin to affect you personally?

Porn really affected who I was and how I thought about myself and others. I carried a huge weight of guilt with me every day. I felt terrible about what I was doing in my spare time, but I was too afraid to tell anyone. I had never heard about a girl who had a porn addiction, so I thought that something was wrong with me. I was way too scared to talk to anyone about it, even my close friends or family, so I kept my struggle a secret for about six years.

I felt as if I was living a double life, with a smile on my face despite the terribleness that I was experiencing behind a screen. Even though looking at porn made me feel guilty, empty, and lonely, I would act as if I had everything together, and that was exhausting. I would compare how actual people looked compared to the porn stars I saw on screen to see if porn was realistic

or not. I guess I wanted to know if what I was seeing in porn was how relationships and people functioned in the real world.

How did porn affect your life?

Looking at pornography took a lot away from my life. In school, I finally knew what those boys were saying to me and what they were asking me to do, but I was shocked to see that it didn't help the situation at all. Now that I knew what they were asking of me, it made me feel even more uncomfortable and in danger. It scared me, and what was even more terrifying was that I was attracted to those actions. I would go to school and refuse their demands, but as soon as I came home I would invest in them behind a screen. It was really messed up.

Pornography taught me that the boys at my school were real, that they were right in demanding me to do things for them. It showed me that sex was violent and male-dominant, that it was just physical and not emotional. I used it as a stress reliever, only to become more stressed after viewing it. Porn did not teach me about loving another person, it taught me that I would be used by someone else, and that was probably the most harmful aspect. Now it feels like the way I see physical love is skewed, it is hard for me to remember that intimacy can be beautiful.

What are your goals?

My goal is to be pornography free for the rest of my life. I know it'll be hard, but I'm already a few months sober! I don't want to have a guilty relationship with pornography, I want to have a real emotional connection with someone. I want to have a tender, loving relationship, and if porn is going to teach me otherwise, then giving it up is definitely worth the fight.

What about The Fortify Program has been really useful or meaningful to you?

The Fortify program has been an amazing help to me. It has taught me several strategies to use in different situation when struggling with porn, and that has been extremely helpful. I really like how I can put in my own thoughts and responses after watching the videos, it really helps me to process through everything I'm learning. This program reminds me that I'm not alone, and it motivates me to keep fighting! And not only for myself, but for others as well.

What makes the ups important and what do you do to deal with the downs?

There are definitely ups and downs when trying to recover from a pornography struggle. It's really hard to bounce back from a setback; you find yourself having to try harder every time it happens which can be really frustrating. When I would give in, I felt like I was letting myself down, and that has been hard for me to get over. I know that I could have made better decisions that wouldn't have affected myself or my relationships, but Fortify has taught me that you can't focus on those things. You acknowledge the mistakes, learn from them, and move on.

The downs are tough, but when you conquer the addiction and don't give into temptation, that's the best feeling. Seriously, it feels so empowering to know that you didn't give in, that you're stronger than how you feel! I think the best part is knowing that I don't have to go back to porn, that I don't need it to feel satisfied. What I want is a real relationship, and I don't need porn to find that.

How has your life started to change since you began this fight?

Making the decision to give up pornography was a hard step to take, but it was so worth the effort. I ended up telling my best friend/mentor shortly after I graduated high school, and once I told her a huge weight came off of my shoulders. Once I had accountability I had more motivation to avoid porn rather than give in to it.

What advice do you have for Fortifiers?

Talk to someone. Tell somebody you trust about your addiction and get accountability. I know that it's way easier said than done, but when you tell someone you're not just fighting for yourself anymore, you're fighting for them as well. Before I talked to my friend, when I found myself struggling it was easy to cave into my feelings. I prioritized temporary satisfaction over recovery, but once I had someone I cared about involved, I became motivated to avoid porn all together. When I told her about my struggle it was really important to me that I didn't let her down. I didn't want her to be disappointed in me. Did it happen? Yes, but I didn't have to go through the setback alone. I received encouragement to do better instead of shame in what I had done, and that makes recovery so much simpler.



Further Resources

[Bloom For Women](#)

[The most successful male porn star of all time speaks out on porn](#)

[Becoming Belle Knox](#)

[What A Girl Wants](#)

[Sext Up Kids: How Growing Up in a Hyper-Sexualized Culture Hurts Our Kids](#)

[Hot Girls Wanted](#)

[Pornland: How the Porn Industry Has Hijacked Our Sexuality](#)

[Deep Inside- A study of 10,000 porn stars and their careers](#)

[The Demise of Guys?](#)

[Adolescent Brain Meets High-Speed Internet Porn](#)

[Things You Didn't Know About Porn: Video for Kids](#)

[Harmful Effects of Pornography- 2016 Reference Guide](#)

[The Guideline- A Parent's Guide to Addressing Pornography with Children](#)

[Tricks Pornographers Play](#)

[Stop Porn Culture](#)

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